DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 357 839 PS 021 290

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TITLE Working Together: Parents and Staff in Nursery Settings.
INSTITUTION Heriot-Watt Univ., Edinburgh (Scotland). Moray House Inst. of Education.
REPORT NO ISBN-0901-58052X
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 128p.
AVAILABLE FROM Moray House Publications, Moray House Institute, Cramond Campus, Cramond Road North, Edinburgh, Scotland EH4 6JD (6 pounds).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Cooperative Planning; Early Childhood Education; Foreign Countries; Needs Assessment; *Nursery Schools; Parent Attitudes; *Parent School Relationship; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; Program Descriptions; Program Effectiveness; *Recordkeeping; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Scotland

ABSTRACT

This report presents two case studies that document the efforts of two Scottish nursery schools to foster good home-school relations. The schools involved were Dunsmore Nursery School, which serves 40 students in the morning and 20 in the afternoon and which employs a headteacher, 4 nursery nurses, and a caretaker; and Blairhall Nursery School, a small nursery school for 12 children that is attached to a rural primary school. The case studies profile on-going developments at the schools over time. The aims of the parent-teacher collaboration efforts were the same at both schools. These aims were to: (1) establish the nature and extent of parent-teacher partnership from both parents' and staff members' perspectives; (2) clarify policy on parent-teacher partnerships; (3) examine current recording procedures; (4) identify procedures for monitoring and evaluating initiatives involving parents and staff; (5) identify areas for development from the perspectives of staff and parents; (6) draw up a list of areas to be developed and ideas to be tried; (7) renegotiate the policy statement and the recording and evaluation procedures, if necessary; (8) address the top priority area for development; and (9) record, monitor, and evaluate the development of the top priority area. For each of these aims, the report details activities and outcomes at each school and provides relevant record-keeping forms. (AC)

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WORKING TOGETHER:

PARENTS AND STAFF IN NURSERY SETTINGS

PS 021990

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ISBN 0901 58052X

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Moray House Publications
Moray House Institute
Cramond Campus
Cramond Road North
Edinburgh EH4 6JD

Price £6.00

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the following people, without whose time, help, advice and cooperation the work would not have been done.

Moray House Institute for funding

The Director of Education for Fife Region

The Adviser in Nursery Education, Mrs N Taylor for her continual support and interest

and perhaps more importantly the parents and all the staff of two nurseries who worked so very hard, who gave the issues time and critical thought and who graciously allowed their detailed documents to be published.

Foreword

Positive working relationships cannot be imposed; they must evolve. It is recognised that good home-school relations are important and worth building not just in terms of people being civil to each other and exchanging information but to facilitate appropriate shared involvement in education. Schools have to live through the process themselves. The people in each school are unique. Nevertheless it would be foolish simply to assume that they must therefore be left to their own devices without support or guidance. Some insight into how others have proceeded, the range of approaches which are possible and some practical suggestions is useful background. We are presenting the working documents for two example schools in their entirety to highlight the **process** of moving forward rather than just giving a summary of outcomes or "good ideas".

We chose two quite different nursery settings for the "on-the-job" study. One was a nursery school of forty morning and twenty afternoon places, whilst the other was as small nursery class attached to a rural primary school. The documents are hardly examples of "normal" case studies, carefully maintaining the confidentiality of each school and a degree of objectivity. They are intensely personal to the schools which worked them through and therefore very revealing. We have deliberately retained the names of the schools since the essence of the schools emerges anyway. It is a pleasure that the nurseries were generous enough to allow others to share their work. The documents are not even "finished" coming to neat conclusions. Rather they represent a profile of ongoing developments in a given time-span. The long hard process of improving, evaluating and trying again continues in each setting. Priorities are still being rethought and statements modified. Perhaps the most important aspect of the study which cannot be easily documented in the growing critical approach emerging in both staff and parents as they work towards real partnership in their own setting. The spin-off for other schools is that such research demonstrates a way of tackling the difficulty of tapping into parents views. It offers ideas for simply recording and monitoring procedures in parent-staff partnership and gives examples of unique but appropriately evolved policy statements and ways forward.

The **nursery setting** was a deliberate choice as the starting place for a detailed study of the process of building good relationships between staff and parents, since attitudes, once established here are likely to affect behaviour throughout formal education. It is during the nursery years that firm foundations are laid. The nursery school is in a unique position in that parents or carers and staff actually meet each day. Children must be brought over the threshold, so there is less likely to be a problem of contact. Daily contact, however brief, must go a long way towards breaking down perceived differences between "them" and "us". Parents talk to staff naturally about the child's current behaviour, nursery events and so on, and due to children's enthusiasm to share what they are doing, families are inevitably drawn into nursery activities. However, if the working relationship is to be more than just casual exchange, there must be an attempt to involve staff and parents in deeper discussion, shared planning and critical reviewing. Recording and monitoring are important. It was with a view to gaining insight into this process of learning to share ever more effectively that the case studies were conducted.

The task of monitoring such a process lends itself particularly well to collaborative research, with an "outside" facilitator or "professional friend" and those involved in the specific context. There is inevitably an emotional component which must be faced in changing relationships. Being open to comment and possible criticism can cause apprehension, especially amongst staff. However, openness can be achieved and staff and parents grow in confidence as a result. The facilitator can act as a sounding board for ideas and can put the whole thing into context. She can share enthusiasms, be a shoulder to cry on and help brainstorm alternatives. An enormous amount of staff and parent development takes place as a result of working through a series of tasks together, which inevitably will be of benefit to the children.

Of course research into practice in specific settings can, at best, stimulate conversation and encourage a sharing of ideas. It cannot offer advice about what will work in another school. That is for each school to grapple with for itself. It is often a hard process as the schools involved with testify!! We know it is worth the effort. We wish every success to all those parents and staff trying to improve ways of working together in their own settings.

Moray House Institute of Education
Heriot-Watt University

Parent-Teacher Collaboration Project
Case Study: Dunmore Nursery School

Phase 2 1991/92
Monitoring the Progress

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PARENTS AND TEACHERS WORKING TOGETHER IN NURSERY SCHOOLS (DUNMORE)

Background

Improved parent teacher communication and partnership is the explicit aim of current legislation (School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988). This is the logical development from repeated reports and research notes, stressing the importance in educational terms of parents and teachers improving shared understanding and working together. Although there is plenty of well-documented argument for the need to co-operate, there has been less concentration in examining the step-by-step process necessary, in particular schools and on the requirement for those involved to develop monitoring techniques necessary for constant modification and improvement of practice.

In 1988 an initial investigation was made in a sample of Edinburgh primary schools into "good practice" in a variety of settings. It was clear that each school was unique and that relationships had to be built up between the particular people involved over a period of time. Nevertheless there were some "good ideas" which could usefully be shared to offer suggestions to schools to stimulate their own discussions and spark off new ideas. These, together with some basic approaches for workshops for parents and teachers were published in "Primary Workshop Notes : Parents and Teachers working together".

Stage 2 is to engage in some collaborative action research in a small sample of nursery schools to focus on the actual **process** of strengthening and improving relationships, whether the school is relatively inexperienced or well down the avenue of parent-teacher collaboration. It is recognised that the steps taken might be very small and the process of consolidation and improvement slow. Nevertheless the effort is acknowledged as worthwhile by those involved.

Improvement seems to depend on careful monitoring of what is going on and brief but efficient recording of what has been tried, together with some evaluation. It requires a clear statement of where the school is at the outset, together with a profile of progress. Revision of short-term objectives must be based on reasoned argument, preferably with some evidence available to support the case.

The aim of the research in each school, is to provide a brief profile of ongoing developments, with monitoring data offering some evaluation of the methods already tried. Pointers for future development in the specific context will be looked for.

Perhaps more importantly, the research aims to establish a critical approach in staff and parents as they move forward in partnership in their own setting so that evaluation of each new step becomes second nature and honest exchange becomes deeper than exchanging pleasantries or sharing specific problems about a child. There is a commitment to constant improvement and development.

The Study

Devising a "profile" of ongoing development and monitoring the progress clearly can not be achieved by a "snapshot " visit to a nursery school. It was felt to be important to build up a relationship with the staff, parents and children in the nursery over a period of time, so that progress was a shared endeavour. It was decided to conduct two cases in Fife, one of which is Dunmore Nursery.

In Dunmore Nursery, the aims were

1 To establish the **nature and extent of parent-teacher partnership**, from parents and staff perspectives.

2 To clarify present **policy** on parent teacher partnership, and the methods of implementing this policy.

3 To examine current **recording procedures**.

4 To identify the **procedures for monitoring and evaluating** any initiatives involving parents and staff together.

5 To identify **areas for development** or **proposed initiatives** from both parents and staff perspectives.

6 To draw up an initial **list of areas for development** which should be addressed, ordered according to priority, and **ideas to be tried**.

7 (If necessary) to **renegotiate** the
- policy statement
- recording procedures
- evaluation procedures

8 To **address** the first area for development, or try the first idea.

9 To **record** what happens.

10 To **monitor and evaluate** what happens

The School and its Background

Dunmore Nursery School has operated since 1960 and holds both morning and afternoon sessions. It has its full complement of children, taking forty in the morning and twenty in the afternoon. The headteacher is assisted by four nursery nurses in the morning, two of whom stay on for the full day. An experienced caretaker combines her duties with a general caring role. She lives locally and is well known to the children and their families. An auxiliary to assist with a child with special educational needs works on Monday and Tuesday lunchtimes. There are often nursery nurse training students working in the nursery. YTS trainees and local High School pupils visit as part of their course.

The nursery school has good facilities:

Two playrooms
Dining area
Parents' area, where friends and family can make tea/coffee
Staffroom
Headteacher's Office
Toilet area
Laundry/utility room
Large outdoor play area and grassed area.

The catchment area is rural, an area of higher employment although some of the employment is casual and seasonal. The housing is steadily being upgraded and in general the facilities in the village are improving because of Urban Aid Funding. There is a community centre and outreach community social workers. There are two other nurseries in the area.

AIM 1

To establish the nature and extent of parent-teacher partnership from parents' and staff perspectives.

It was decided to interview parents in small groups and staff individually, to ascertain present perceptions of the nursery work. For parents, a modified form of the S.O.E.D. Suggested Questionnaire for parents (Nursery School Form) was devised (see Appendix 1). It was adapted into a set of questions (rather than statements) which could be posed orally to small groups at a time, since it was felt that the written form may seem a little parent unfriendly, in this nursery which has taken time to build up a positive face-to-face working relationship. The date of March 5th was selected as parent interview day and the whole parent body was informed by letter. 2 groups of 10 families each were selected to represent the 40 children with morning places, and all the families of the afternoon children were needed. Those selected received a personalised letter, giving the background, date and place and the day was organised so that 10 parents arrived at 9.15, 10 at 11.00, 10 at 1.00 and 10 at 2.45pm. Each group of 10 were the families of children in the care of a particular member of staff. (4 groups for the 4 members of staff) The nursery works a system whereby children are grouped under a named adult who takes a special interest in each child's individual progress. Although these 40 parents were offered a special time and place, it was made clear to other parents that they could join a discussion group if they wished, or else they could take home one of the questionnaires and return it, completed by the end of the week. 4 completed questionnaires were received. To thank the parents for their cooperation, each one who took part was given a free raffle ticket, the chance of winning a box of chocolates. The interviews were conducted by the researcher, with two mature undergraduate students, although it was clarified to the parents that the questions were being asked with the headteacher and staff's full cooperation, and with the express aim of making the experience in this particular nursery the best it could be for the children. Although the discussion took place in groups, the individual responses were recorded and it was stressed to parents that they need not agree on their answers, that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers. In practice the parents did not turn up all together, and so the discussion groups varied in size and several one to one interviews were conducted. Parents simply made up groups as they came in, usually in twos or threes, and many stayed for a coffee and a chat after the more formal interview was over. Altogether 30 mothers were interviewed (no fathers showed up) and many had had to make special arrangements to be there. They realised the importance of the activity.

The staff interviews were conducted a week later. Again a modified form of the S.O.E.D. Questionnaire for staff (Nursery Form) was used, devised after discussion between the headteacher and the researcher (see Appendix 2). The statement form was changed with questions for more ready answers in an interview situation. Members of staff did not have the questions before the interview, to avoid discussion and sharing of responses. It was felt to be important that each member of staff got a chance and give her own opinion. The 4 nursery assistants were interviewed and then the caretaker and the dinner lady. The headteacher ensured that the staff were fully aware of what was happening from the beginning of the project; it was very important that everyone felt involved, because of course it did demand a lot of hard work and special effort.

The data was then collated and presented in table form.

Researcher's Comment on the Methodology

The oral presentation worked well for parents, and the fact that 4 parents only took up the opportunity to complete a written form suggested that face-to-face was a preferred way of gathering the data (although some of the parents interviewed did say that they would not have minded completing a written form - intentions and actions are not always the same!). The exercise was time-consuming, however, and the day-long presence of parents on the premises called for a lot of support from nursery staff.

SUMMARY OF ORAL PRESENTATION

DUNMORE NURSERY SCHOOL, BALLINGRY, FIFE

QUESTIONS TO PARENTS N = 30

MARCH 1992

GENERAL	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Do you think most children like being at the nursery?	26	4			
Do you feel generally, there is no problem about the children's behaviour in the class?	10	13	4		3
Do you think staff generally treat children kindly and fairly?	21	4			5
Do the children like the staff in general?	25	5			
Do you think the nursery school has a poor reputation in the community			7	23	

Comments

Behaviour

"Used to be a problem - well under control now". Discipline is "sensible" :just like you are at home"
The 'chair' is only rarely used - "big threat. Usually enough".

Children like staff

Generally yes - but usually prefer "own" teacher ("Well, bairns do, ken?")

Good reputation

This is the nursery people would **choose**. "They try their best here". "Lots of variety - more than any nursery joined to a school" "Plenty of trips".

Children's behaviour and staff treatment

Several "Don't knows".

Parents and the School	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do you think most parents show support for the nursery?	12	10	8
Have they explained to what part you can play in your child's education?	17	10	3
Would you talk to nursery staff only if there was a problem or crisis?	2	27	1
If you complain about something, would you be sure of getting a sympathetic hearing?	28		2
Do you think parents should be involved with the children's activities at the nursery school?	22	5	3
Do you think there should be some parents' activities at the nursery school?	19	9	2

Parent Support
"Lots could do more." "Some do; some don't." "A few do."

Explanation
"Yes when children were about to start." "In a group they do." - "Well once (I think)." "Talk about reading books and things."

Complaint
"No idea." "Never had to." "No experience." "I expect they would listen"

Parental Involvement
"I try to hang back - good for bairn to get oot the hoose and wi other bairns." "Children are with parents at home - good opportunity for wee ones to learn to be away from their Mum and play with peers."

Parents Activities
"Fine the way it is." "About right at moment." "No more!" "Wouldn't have the time to join in." "Week-end away was great - no kids." "Only want activities now and again - not regular." "Only if there was a creche."

The "No Smoking" ruling was grumbled about by several parents, who said it made things difficult if you needed a puff to relax. "It's important to have a Parents' Room or space - otherwise you get soaked on a wet day, but it needs to be bigger and definitely needs a toilet for parents as well as one for staff."

Tying up the parents activities **and** parents showing support, parents mentioned the difficulties of being involved when they had other commitments eg toddlers or elderly relatives, but argued that every parent could help out at least once, especially in the early weeks of the child being at nursery - children like it. They also warned against assuming that just because parent weren't actually in the nursery they were not supportive of what was going on.

PARENTS AND STAFF WORKING TOGETHER	Always	Usually	Some-times	Never	Don't know
Do you feel happy and comfortable when you are at the nursery school?	28	1	1		
Do you get a chance to speak honestly about anything which concerns you?	28	2			
Does the nursery make good use of any time and skills to offer?	17	1	2	2	8
Do they discourage questions and suggestions?	2	2	1	25	

YOUR CHILD	Yes	No	Don't know	
Do the staff keep you fully informed about your child's progress?	21	8	1	Wednesday class good for reviewing child's progress. The "night" was good to talk to the teacher.
Do they tell you about your child's good points?	21	7	2	
Do they let you know where your child needs help?	19	11		
Do you know that if your child has difficulty he/she will be helped?	29		1	"No complaints."

One parent felt left out because she did not get a Home Visit, when everyone else did.

Good points

"Usually only about whether he's eaten his dinner, or something like that."
"They do if you ask - but they won't if you don't."
"They show you what she's made, and say it's really good - they tell the child too."

Where the child needs help

No experience."
"Never arisen."
"Perhaps they would just tell the individual?"

These are some things parents in other schools have said we want to know how far you agree with them.

	Agree very much	Agree	Don't agree	Don't agree at all	
I get a really nice welcome every day from the staff.	26	3	1		
I feel they know my child as an individual.	16	14			
I know I can just ask if I need advice and help.	25	5			
Staff are approachable and make time to listen.	13	17			"Some-times"
I would like to be more involved with what goes on at the nursery.	3	10	15	2	
There's plenty for parents to do here.	12	7	11		
I wish someone would explain to me why they just seem to play about all the time.		3	10	17	
The other parents aren't very friendly.	1	1	9	19	
'Proper' education doesn't really begin until primary school.		3	4	23	
Staff let some children away with murder.			13	8	Don't know 9
The headteacher is approachable and helpful.	24	6			
Information from the nursery school could be improved		4	9	17	

More involved in what goes on	"Already **very** involved - couldn't do more." "Creche needed." "There are always plenty of chances - it's up to yourself" "I'd be more involved if I had more time." "Being involved doesn't mean you're always coming in."
Plenty for parents to do	"It's the same ones all the time." I'm not bothered." "Wouldn't have time anyway."
Playing all the time	"They **definitely** don't just play." "They are learning all the time." "They learn their colour, counting, reading - they're not playing." "They learn wee songs and then they learn me. She loves it when we sing them at home." "Well I suppose they do play - well, that's bairns isn't it?"
"Proper" education at primary	**Strong** reaction. **Most** said it definitely was "real" education at nursery, and one agreed that education began when the child was born. Two suggested it might be a better to be a bit more formal at nursery.
Children get away with murder	Many parents felt they did not know enough to answer this. They were not around to see but "Can't imagine so!" "No complaints." "Well disciplined." "As far as I've seen, definitely **not**."
Headteacher approachable	Very enthusiastic response to this question. "Marvellous - gets involved in everything." "She's always there." "Great." "Probably **too** approachable - she never gets a minute!" No one hesitated in agreeing with this statement.
Information	"Excellent." "It's all there - newsletter, posters, noticeboard. If people don't know it is their own fault."
	Two mothers mentioned that if you did not drop and pick up your own children you sometimes missed things - or if your child was sick.

There may be a number of things about the nursery school which you would like to mention but which haven't been covered by the questions. If there are, please tell me or write them here for us.

Like, can you think of anything which would improve the nursery?

Have there been any ideas which have been tried which you thought were particularly good?

Several parents mentioned the importance of linking with families - which they feel the nursery does well. They always feel important and welcome.

There was particular appreciation for the Wednesday group where they felt to be learning a lot. (Awareness of print group.)

The most frequently mentioned point was that a **creche** was needed -"definitely - otherwise you feel guilty cos you can never go in."

They wanted a creche to have its own staff (**not** parents) otherwise parents can not get involved in anything else and "anyway, why should we take the responsibility for loads of kids?" They said more staff would be needed. On the other hand, one parent definitely did **not** want a creche. She argued that the teachers had enough to do with the nursery children and "wee ones could take the attention away from the other children, because all the teachers here like bairns, and wee babies are even cuter, so teachers would be tempted."

Several mentioned that they would welcome rather more **flexible hours** so that the nursery morning could be a little longer. They said if you went to College, for example, which didn't finish until 12.00, you had to make a short-term alternative arrangement, and it would be nice just to let the child stay at nursery for the extra half hour occasionally.

More funds were mentioned. "Always needed." "Parents and teachers do their best - we're **always** raising money for something. We pull together, which is right, but a bit extra would make it easier."

In particular, with a bit of money, the **outside playing area** could be resurfaced eg Astraturf (!) "It's amazing there have had no big accidents. The teachers have to watch them all the time."

They mentioned how good trips outside the nursery were and would welcome **weekly trips** (parents with children). They said a lot of classes had to share the mini bus, and more frequent use would be better.

A **large Parents' area** would be better, and indeed, more space generally.

A **library and a computer** would be improvements

More cooking for the children.

More information about the child's **progress** - particularly comments.

The **Christmas Fayre** got several mentions as a particularly successful effort.

SUMMARY OF PARENTS' WRITTEN RESPONSES N = 4

DUNMORE NURSERY SCHOOL, BALLINGRY, FIFE

QUESTIONS TO PARENTS

MARCH 1992

GENERAL	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Do you think most children like being at the nursery?	3	1		
Do you feel generally, there is no problem about the children's behaviour in the class?	1	2	1	
Do you think staff generally treat children kindly and fairly?	3	1		
Do the children like the staff in general?	2	2		
Do you think the nursery school has a poor reputation in the community?			2	2

Comments

There were no additional comments on any question.

PARENTS AND THE SCHOOL	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do you think most parents show support for the nursery?	4		
Have they explained to you what part you can play in your child's education?	2	2	
Would you talk to nursery staff only if there was a problem or crisis?	2	2	
If you complain about something, would you be sure of getting a sympathetic hearing?	3		1
Do you think parents should be involved with the children's activities at the nursery school?	3	1	
Do you think there should be some parents' activities at the nursery school?	2	1	1

PARENTS AND STAFF WORKING TOGETHER	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Do you feel happy and comfortable when you are at the nursery school?	3	1		
Do you get a chance to speak honestly about anything which concerns you?	2	1	1	
Does the nursery make good use of any time and skills you offer?	1	2	1	
Do they discourage questions and suggestions?			1	3

YOUR CHILD	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do the staff keep you fully informed about your child's progress?	2	2	
Do they tell you about your child's good points?	3	1	
Do they let you know where you child needs help?	2	1	1
Do you know that if your child has difficulty he/she will be helped?	2	1	1

These are some things parents in other schools have said. We want to know how far you agree with them.

	Agree Very Much	Agree	Don't Agree	Don't Agree At All
I get a really nice welcome every day from the staff.	3	1		
I really feel they know my child as an individual.	2	2		
I know I can just ask if I need advice and help.	3	1		
Staff are approachable and make time to listen.	3		1	
I would like to be more involved with what goes on at the nursery.	1	1	2	
There's plenty for parents to do here.	2	1	1	
I wish someone would explain to me why they just seem to play about all the time.	1	1	2	
The other parents aren't very friendly.			4	
'Proper' education doesn't really begin until primary school.		1	2	1
Staff let some children away with murder.			2	2
The headteacher is approachable and helpful.	3		1	
Information from the nursery school could be improved.		1	2	1

There may be a number of things about the nursery school which you would like to mention but which haven't been covered by the questions. If there are, please tell me or write them here for us.

Like, can you think of anything which would improve the nursery?

Have there been any ideas which have been tried which you thought were particularly good?

It was interesting to note that ***no-one*** *wrote anything in this space in contrast with the discussion groups where ideas were readily forthcoming.*

Thank you very much for your help.

\SUMMARY OF NURSERY NURSE VIEWS N = 4

PARENTS AND THE NURSERY SCHOOL	
Do you think most parents show support for the nursery?	Three members of staff answered "yes" to this question. The fourth one felt that she could not say a **majority** supported, although some certainly did.
Has school explained to parents its policies and basic approaches?	One member of staff said that the Headteacher did so, and made an effort to explain in terms of what each parent needed. Another answered, "We try" - especially early on in the child's life at nursery. The best method seemed to be through casual chat and at Parents' Nights. A third said this was done through the Booklet, by Word of Mouth and home visits. A fourth suggested that everyday chat was really the best method because it had relevance and was immediate.
Has school explained what part parents can play in their child's education?	A distinction was made between those parents who attend the Wednesday meetings (and who benefit from a lot of explanation) and the other parents. All the staff felt they were **improving** in this area, but that perhaps there was still some way to go. They did try, and in terms of practicalities, like teaching parents how to make dough for children to play with at home, there was some success. Discussing class activities with parents often leads naturally to parents' comments about how they could follow this up at home, which is beneficial. A problems comes with ensuring there is some time for **all** parents. It seems to be best undertaken at the individual level.
Do parents only get in touch if there is a problem or issue?	Again there was mixed reaction to this question. "Some do, some don't". The general feeling was that most parents felt comfortable enough to chat about anything although one member of staff did feel that "A lot" of parents would only come if there was something special. Another felt it would be about half and half.
Can parents be sure that action will be taken in response to a justified complaint?	All the staff were sure that parents would be confident of action if they made a complaint.
Do the parents of children with problems appreciate the help they get from school?	The staff felt on the whole parents did appreciate what the nursery does, although there are always a few who don't. Sometimes parents do not recognise that there is a problem. Often parents really appreciate the fact that the nursery staff are understanding and caring without being threatening. They are not seen as "interfering". Sometimes it's as simple as having someone to talk over an issue with.
Would you welcome opportunities to meet parents during school hours?	Three of the staff welcomed opportunities to meet parents during nursery hours, whereas one felt it would detract from her work with children. It created a split in loyalties. Those who did welcome parents, felt it was a useful bridge for the child.

Would you welcome opportunities to meet parents outwith school hours?	Two of the staff welcomed the possibility of meeting parents outwith school hours, and indeed one was so well integrated that she did have invitations to join parents' social occasions, quite outwith nursery activities. The other two staff felt that such occasions should be rare, although they accepted the importance of Parents' Nights. Social events would not be welcome.
Would you welcome working with parents in the nursery school?	All the staff felt that working with parents in the nursery was a good thing and should be encouraged. It not only benefitted the children directly but gave parents a useful insight into the running of the nursery, and an understanding of the expectations and routine.

PARENT-STAFF PARTNERSHIP	
Do you make a special effort to greet parents and welcome them into a nursery school?	The staff all made an effort to be welcoming, feeling it to be a really important part of their work. One did remind that occasionally practicalities made it impossible to greet each individual, but that a smiling welcoming face was still very desirable.
Do you see parents as partners in the child's education?	There was a unanimous and definite "Yes" to this question. "There **has** to be", "Definitely".
Do you try to speak honestly to parents about anything which concerns you?	All the staff felt that they made an honest attempt to tackle anything of concern, although they reminded that this is not always easy. "They don't want to hear". Staff argued that it was important not to neglect things until they got out of hand, and preferred honest exchange. (with diplomacy where necessary!) from the beginning. That was how trust developed.
Do you listen carefully to any matters of concern voiced by parents?	The staff **do** listen, saying that if it was important enough for someone to raise, then it demands attention. One added that if she couldn't handle what she heard, she would consult with the Headteacher.
Do you try to make use of any offers of help from parents?	The staff would **certainly** make use of offers of help from parents but reminded that not a lot of unsolicited offers came in. Parents usually wait to be asked and perhaps, 2 suggested, they should go out of their way to be more encouraging to parents, to show them that their offers would really be welcomed.
Do you discourage suggestions and questions from parents?	One member of staff clarified that she would never discourage questions, but if a suggestion was not in the best interest of the child she would discuss it, and would say what she believed to the parent. Another member of staff said she would discourage idle gossip when the focus should be on the child.- indeed any conversation which does not directly affect the child is better left until after nursery hours, otherwise loyalties are split. The others said it would be very unusual to discourage parents.

PARENTS AND THEIR CHILD	
Do you keep parents fully informed about their child's progress?	Three of the staff thought perhaps they did not do enough about keeping parents really up-to-date with their child's progress. They felt they maybe didn't meet regularly enough during the term and that the conversations tended to be restricted to current activities and behaviour on that day, rather than being able to take an overview. They reminded how difficult it was to have a long and meaningful talk with a parent when it meant others had to slip away without a word. The staff had to be aware of individual needs of parents and of their possible reactions to information. One member of staff thought they did manage to offer enough information by using the record sheet and chatting.
Do you talk about the child's good points?	All the staff agreed they talked about the children's good points. One said, "Mainly!"
Do you tell them where their child needs help?	All the staff firmly agreed that they would share the child's needs with parents, albeit in a supportive, positive way.
Do you try to involve parents when a child needs help?	All staff agreed they would involve parents. It depended on the nature of the problem whether this would be done informally first of all, or by consulting the head. For a matter of some concern, the pattern was likely to be first to consult the headteacher, who would invite a parent or parents for 3 way discussion so that plans for action could be made together. This would be done in a supported way so that shared understanding would lead to action which was manageable and could be sustained

INVOLVING PARENTS: Good things and future developments

Staff recognised the importance of involving parents and encouraging positive attitudes to the child's growth and development. More frequent contact leads to build-up of trusting, honest exchange and if parents work in a nursery, it gives them a chance to judge the kinds of relationship established. One member of staff pointed out that mums like to work in the nursery because they feel they are doing something worthwhile: they feel a valued part of their child's education and that they have an opinion worth asking (when such an experience is not necessarily common for them). Even the fact that there is a social group for them to be part of is important, since many are shy and perhaps would not have made the effort to join a group. As they chat amongst themselves, it becomes something of a self-help group because they are able to share feelings and perhaps strategies for coping with current problems, eg. what to do if you cannot afford to pay a recent bill. Most staff felt that careful planning was necessary for any venture involving parents, since it mattered very much that the outcome was **positive**. On the whole everything that has been tried at the nursery has been well-recieved and this is because it has been fully discussed first.

The Wednesday group (and the WEA group when it met in nursery school premises) seemed to be of a very positive benefit bringing richness to those involved, although one member of staff said she was glad she didn't have to be part of such a group since she felt her strength was working with children rather than the parents. She felt that the nursery did in fact, cope well with activities for parents by themselves focussing on the individual child and what could be done, but that they had perhaps been neglectful of trying to get parents more **involved with the children** and their activities. Perhaps this was because with students and so on, there always seemed to be plenty of staff but it was an important aspect of the work and she suggested a **parents rota** for activities with the children, rather than just assuming parents wanted to come to help or be educated for themselves. This would mean also the establishment of a creche, to enable parents with young children to take their place. On the other hand, another nurse argued that a parents rota, and the whole idea of advance planning and programming was very difficult for many of the parents in this area. It was, however, something worth working at, though she said the task had to be made very specific so it wasn't threatening, eg. stating exactly what the mum would have to do and how many children might be involved.

Another nursery nurse felt the **parents group work** was so useful it should be **expanded** to bring in those not yet involved. She suggested that a **different set of topics** might encourage other parents. In addition it was suggested a **group meeting** might occasionally happen **out of school** hours for those tied during daytime hours.

It was suggested that a **Family Worker** would be a most welcome asset to the nursery, who could **work with** the parents, visit them in their homes and generally be able to focus on the needs of **the parents** when the nursery staff always felt something of a split loyalty, since time taken to **work** with parents meant less time spent with the children.

There was a plea for more **space** since there was a lack of private spaces, eg. for the nurse, visiting specialists, or even research interviewers! Certainly the researcher was aware that every member of staff in the demanding job involving people, especially young children, needs somewhere to recuperate for 5 minutes in privacy at break times and with action everywhere, this could be impossible. One thing to be mindful of in opening up the nursery to parents is that staff do not feel stressed about **people** being constantly about; that there are some moments of sanctuary.

Student Views (N = 2)

Students were very positive about the efforts being made at Dunmore to involve parents. They felt that most parents would **like** to support the work of the nursery, even though sometimes they did not have the confidence to show it. They felt parents were sure of gaining a listening ear if there was something they wanted to say, although they agreed that there were some parents who would not get in touch unless there was a specific need. One expressed doubt about whether she would welcome meeting parents, outwith nursery hours, except for the occasional Parents' Night, and one made an interesting observation when asked if she would welcome working with parents in the nursery school. She had observed that some children do no do as much if their parent is on the premises and so suggested that parental involvement be restricted to only **some activities**, or **specific times**, or perhaps in a room other than that where the parents' own child was. Both students felt it really important that the staff and parents should certainly be seen as partners in education. The other student was a bit dubious about whether they were equal partners, feeling that the nursery staff were perhaps more knowledgeable in some areas. They both felt that trips out of the nursery were a really useful activity to share with parents and neither could think of anything which the nursery school had not already tried to involve parents further.

Views of Staff Working Mainly Outwith the Classroom (N = 2)

The staff felt that parents were very appreciative of the nursery "Glad to have it". The nursery staff went out of their way to explain things to parents, and parents **should** know what was going on in terms of nursery activities and what part they could play. Both remarked that there was a hardcore of the "same faces" who were always around, and some who never really came near. Perhaps half the parents would only ever be involved if there was a specific problem. The staff welcomed parents into the nursery (although one commented ruefully that she wished they would tidy up after themselves a bit!) Both of the staff were "well kent" in the community and so did not really have to make any special effort to meet parents outwith nursery hours. One would be dubious about any commitment out of nursery hours which would be too time-consuming. They said that "some parents" only could be seen as partners in education. For others it was the nursery's job to "bring the bairns on before they go to school". Since both were well known to parents, parents often told them their troubles and "had a wee chat". On the whole, parents did **not** offer to help either member of staff, although sometimes they worked together eg for home-baking. One commented that the weekly meeting for parents seemed very good. Neither could offer any suggestions for future development with parents, but were generally satisfied with the way things were going.

Aim 2 to clarify the present policy

At the beginning of the study there was no separate document giving the policy statement on parent-teacher partnership, although the headteacher clarified that that was the next area for her attention. Nevertheless there are frequent relevant mentions within the general written documentation of the school. On the first page of the school "Information for Parents" it is pointed out that there is a Parents Area where family and friends can help themselves to tea or coffee for a small charge. There are several activities like Parents' Discussion groups, with topics including nursery aims, play activities and child issues. Parents help with money-raising activities and run a Thrift Shop. The availability of the toy and book library for home borrowing is brought to parents' attention. The booklet also answers typical parent questions in a clear and concise way eg "Will I know what is going on?"

The answer is:

"A Newsletter keeps parents in touch with any activities fundraising and holidays. Our Notice Board often gives further details of events. Please take time to read them".

Also in the booklet is handy and sympathetic advice on preparing the child for entry to Nursery. There is some useful explanation of the part parents can play in supporting the work of the nursery eg:

"If you can take an interest in the things he brings home (paintings, models etc) you are showing your child how pleased you are to share in his new experiences. Try making a book of his paintings together or display them".

Two-way exchange of information is repeatedly encouraged and the booklet finishes by reinforcing the message.

"The Head and other members of staff are always available to listen to problems and help if possible. Welcome to our nursery."

Home visits are a normal part of nursery operation, particularly for children about to begin nursery. Other visits are made in cases of sickness, prolonged absence, emotional upheaval etc. Parents involved in the "Awareness of print" project are visited at home and some parents invite staff home on a friendly basis eg to help bake, see the garden etc.

There have been experiments of moving parents evenings to "neutral" territory - the Community Centre, which, although undertaken for practical reasons in fact proved very advantageous. Parents are heavily involved in fundraising events, special projects (like cutting down on smoking) and helping with outings (transport in the community minibus) as well as "within nursery activities. The nursery policy is to involve parents whenever possible at whatever level is appropriate. Valuable examples of cooperation are such as a father who is a budgie breeder gave a bird to the nursery, and invited children back to see his aviary. Parents made the gerbil a cage and others have grown in confidence and skills through baking with the children in the nursery. Gifts from parents include a ton of topsoil! Resources like the tape lending library (shared with other local schools) make a useful contact point. Sometimes a shared activity becomes a parent initiative, such as followed a food project, where nursery made up Baking Kits (including equipment, ingredients, recipe leaflet) for basics such as pizza or brown bread loaf. Parents subsequently teamed up and visited each other's houses to continue baking together.

An initiative which involves parents socialising with staff is "Growing up in Fife", where meetings are held to let members of the community get to know each other. More formal community involvement comes in the "Professional Forum" and "Under 8's Contact Group" where staff debate with other community issues.

Parents have a place where they are welcome in the nursery - which is always available up to 11.25 (when it has be be vacated for the children's lunch) and in the afternoons. It is a no-smoking area, but tea and coffee are always available. The headteacher makes a special point of being around to welcome parents in the morning and, when she is occupied in the afternoon, the senior nursery nurse takes over. There used to be a crêche made available by the WEA once a week when they ran a discussion group on Women's issues - an agenda set by the women themselves - and this was a very valuable service, badly missed, but the nursery does have the advantage of the Playbus crêche on Mondays, which enables parents to involve themselves with nursery activities or the SCOTVEC catering module on offer (Lauder College Outreach Worker).

On Tuesdays an Outreach worker comes to address the women's group. The nursery makes a special effort to ensure that parents are closely involved in the bridge between nursery and primary school that they know how the child has progressed at nursery (strengths and areas for further work) and what to expect of primary school.

Notes to parents is a "parent-friendly" detailed statement about parents and teachers working together. It is reproduced in full in the next pages because it could form the basis for the new general policy statement. It is actually given to parents involved in the literacy project at the moment, but its use could well be expanded.

NOTES TO PARENTS

Parental Involvement

1 Where we can be involved together
2 How we can be involved together

1 (a) Nursery staff can work side-by-side with parents and their children in the school.

We can share together as your child learns about books, making junk models and labelling them, making birthday cards and writing a message and we can follow a simple recipe to make something to eat.

(b) The nursery staff are happy to share **with you** all of the books, tapes, games etc that **your** child specially likes. You are welcome to take them home.

(c) The nursery staff can come to your house with some of the books your child likes or can use **your child's own games, toys or books** to help him learn at home so that **you** can join in too.

(d) Sometimes your child may want to keep on doing something he started at nursery. Someone from the school can come to your home and help you and your child.

2 **How we can be involved together**

(a) The nursery staff need your help to get to know your child.

We try to visit you at home so that you and your child can share,in private, the things that you enjoy together.

(b) Each day we try to tell you if your child has done anything special, asked for help to learn a new skill, like tying his laces, doing-up his zip, working the tape recorder. This is so that you can help him at home, when you have his full attention, on his own.

(c) Nursery staff want mums, dads, grand-parents, child minders to join in nursery trips. This is because your child gets much more from a new experience if you can share it with him and can later help him to remember what he/she saw, did ate etc. Then you can help him tell the story of going to the zoo, help him remember what an elephant looks like, write the names on his drawing.

(d) You can tell us when you think your child is really keen to try something new, wants to know more about boats or castles or building houses. We will add to the teaching and telling and sharing what you have done at home. Just tell us - we are happy to help.

Aim 3 to examine current recording procedures (Parent - Staff Partnership)

Parents are informed from the outset that staff keep a close eye on each child's progress and will **keep notes** on the child, both informal jottings and more formally, to ensure continuity as the child moves on into primary education. Staff communicate regularly with the headteacher about the child, noting any strengths and causes for anxiety, which will be shared with parents. If an anxiety is noted, the member of staff discusses with the headteacher and then parent(s), a course of action is decided upon and the member of staff will always be invited to report on progress.

Notes for record-keeping are given to staff and students at the nursery to remind them of record-keeping procedures. (Appendix 3) Stress is on the child's positive achievements although there is an indication of areas which require additional support, practice or experience. The notes conclude with a reminder of the importance of discussion with the parents. The report which is prepared for transition to primary school is always shared with parents and generates discussion. (Appendix 4)

Children with **special educational needs** are always noted, and where appropriate, steps will be taken to work with the other caring agencies, like Educational Psychological Service and Social Work Department. Recorded children are of course monitored in line with the legal requirements. (Appendix 5)

At the moment, the school keeps a **complete file** of Posters advertising parent-staff joint events, invitations to parents (eg to the pre-Christmas lunch) and thank you letters received. (Appendix 6) All documents given to parents are filed, eg Introduction Procedures for children starting (Appendix 7). In addition there is a pro-forma for each formal communication eg Prospective Pupils Home Visit (Appendix 8).

The headteacher's diary gives a record of pre-arranged parental discussions although there is no record of more casual exchange. Any point of importance, however, which is noted from talking with parents is recorded in note form and given to the headteacher for discussion.

Aim 4 to identify procedures for monitoring and evaluating developments in parent - teacher sharing

Evaluation at the informal level of each child and indeed the work of the nursery as a whole is an important constant when parents come to the school every day. "How are things?" is an inevitable entry into **discussion**. Opportunities to chat lessen the chances of great misunderstanding or anxieties and sharing views and concerns is easier than when all communication is by letter. Nevertheless, **some more formal way** to tap parents' opinions is always **welcome**. Fortunately the headteacher has completed the Northern College Module, "Monitoring Effectiveness" and so is very much aware of the importance of monitoring. Already she has devised a short, simple questionnaire for distribution at a Parents' Evening. This invited parents to offer insights into their understanding of the aims of the nursery school and to offer their reasons for sending the children. They could make practical suggestions about improvements possible and evaluate their own child. (See Appendix 9)

The nursery offered a cookery class to parents and not only invited parents to think critically about what is involved in children's baking (See Appendix 10) but asked questions to help analyse the value of the activity. (See Appendix 11) This is an important foundation to building the notion that both parents and staff should be constantly weighing up the advantages and possible drawbacks of ventures, always trying to maximise the advantage. Having the confidence to offer an opinion and know it will be welcomed has to be encouraged gradually.

ANALYSING THE DATA

It was decided to mount a "2-perspective" approach to analysing the data, in that the headteacher with her staff and the researcher made **independent** comment on what the returns might suggest, and then came together for discussion and forward planning.

The headteacher studied the data and wrote a summary of the significant issues for discussion. Time was then made available for staff to exchange ideas. (Staff began at 8.45 am and the children were delayed until 9.15 am with cover being made available for those parents who had to leave children by 9.00 am). The headteacher and the researcher then met to see if the "inside" interpretation and that from an "outsider" were significantly different, and to establish which aspects of the nursery work are going well and which need further development.

HEADTEACHER'S COMMENTS ON STAFF SURVEY

POINTS - ARISING

1 **Parents and School**

(a) **Explanation to parents**

1 Policies and approaches
eg Discipline Policy

2 Education, methods curriculum
(parents as partners)?
Individual approach

(b) Working **with** parents **in** school

3/4 and mixed reactions

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2 **Staff - Parent Partnership** - Positive

3 **Parents and their Child** - 3/4 said No about *
enough info to parents

- Record sheet chat

Good Things

Parents **involved** with their **own** child

Parents evenings are OK

Parents groups expansion *

Trips good to share * (student)

Changes

Students

Staff space/stress level, some peace and quiet essential

Priorities

Information on individual child progress

Parent work in and out of room

Headteacher's Comment on Parents' Survey

1 5/30 parents said genuinely not in a position to judge how staff treat children in normal working (because not there to see!) Shows parents taking the questions seriously and only answering on the evidence available.

2 **Explanation of part parents play in child's ed** - Concern over this. Clearly work to be done.

3 **Nursery makes use of time/skills offered** - Discussion needed.

4 "Your Child" Section

Progress: 8 said "No"
Good points: 7 said No
Where child needs help: 11 said No

Further work needed here on **child's progress**

5 **Plenty for parents** 11/30 don't agree. Working parents may miss out on information.

RESEARCHER'S COMMENTS ON THE RESPONSES

A Parents

Overall the responses were enormously positive. Parents wholeheartedly agreed that the children liked being at the nursery, that they generally liked the staff and were treated well. They mainly thought the children's behaviour was acceptable (as far as they were aware) and all felt the nursery had a good reputation in the community, some bothering to explain that people went out of their way to choose it because it was good (quite a different thing, they clarified, from its being the only facility available). In terms of personal relationships, the parents were very positive that staff were welcoming and made time to listen. Only one parent disagreed - perhaps someone with a particular incident in mind? A similarly heartwarming overwhelmingly positive response was obtained about the approachability and helpfulness of the headteacher. Clearly the headteacher and her staff have worked very successfully in this aspect of the remit. Building up a warm and caring atmosphere is difficult and can only be achieved through time and painstaking patience. The nursery has done well. It is interesting to note that the staff were generally a little less positive than parents about whether parents would only get in touch if there were a problem or crisis. They believed there were still a lot of parents who would only contact if there were some special matter or issue to discuss.

More contentious for parents, was the question of whether most parents showed support for the nursery. They were very divided on this. Nursery nurses and students indeed were more positive than the parents themselves, although the rest of the staff shared parents' perceptions of very mixed support. All parents seemed to feel comfortable at nursery and confident they could speak to nursery staff fairly readily. Only 2 suggested they would restrict their conversations to "crisis" times. Possibly parents were speaking in terms of what they felt happy and able to do (ie. come at any time) whilst the nursery nurses were speaking about what actually tended to happen (ie. they chose only to come if there was a special problem).

No-one felt he/she would not get a sympathetic hearing in case of complaint, although most parents pointed out that the matter had not arisen. On the whole, information from the nursery school was seen to be totally satisfactory, although there were 4 who felt the need for some improvement. Exploration of reasons and opportunity for suggestions might be called for here. One possible explanation which emerged in discussion was that those parents who do not drop off/collect their own children, tend to feel left out of information, presumably missing the opportunities to keep abreast of progress and the general chat which would remind them of events.

Parent and staff views can be compared on specific issues.

Explanation of parents in education The parents were a bit vague about this. More than $^1/_2$ thought the school had explained, but it seemed to be in the past, a one-off opportunity, and not an on-going process. On the other hand, the staff felt they did constantly try to explain, both through the formal mechanisms like initial meeting, nursery booklet, parents nights and also informally in chat. Staff agreed this was probably and area which required improvement.

Parents involvement in children's activities at nursery Nearly all the parents said they should be involved in the children's activities and all staff said this was beneficial. This is a clear mandate for moving forward in this area.

Parental Involvement The majority of parents wanted parents' activities but not necessarily more. They seemed satisfied with what there was, although in answer to the statement that "There's plenty for parents to do here", eleven parents did not agree; certainly twelve expressed complete satisfaction about this. When asked about more involvement in what goes on in the nursery, it was difficult to make a general statement because of course, the question is a relative one. Those who are already heavily committed will answer "No" without its indicating that they would wish less. The satisfied are forced into a negative response, along with those who do not want to be involved, and so attention can only be given to those who answer positively. Nearly $^1/_2$ the parents do feel they would like to be more involved, and so clearly the nursery has not yet reached saturation point.

* **Some discussion about the nature of the involvement envisaged would be useful** The staff views (although the questions were rather differently posed) were mixed. 3 out of 4 of the nursery nurses felt they would welcome opportunities to meet parents during nursery hours but one felt this would create a bit of role-conflict. All however, felt that working with parents with the children in the nursery (as opposed to just chatting to parents) was to be encouraged.

Nursery makes use of any time/skills Parents responses were very mixed (it was the only question which totally spread the answers). Possibly, the parents did not all interpret the question the same way.

Responses:

ALWAYS	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	NEVER	DON'T KNOW
17	1	2	2	8

* Staff said that, of course they made use of any offers which they received, but pointed out that offers did not usually come in. The issue needs some deeper exploration. 2 members of staff did suggest that perhaps the nursery could go out of its way to show parents that they would be delighted to receive offers of help in any area. Clarification of what is expected would be useful.

Do staff discourage questions? This was a difficult question, including as it does, a double negative. Those who answered in the strong category, might well have made a mistake since a "strongly agree" answer here would not tally with what has been said elsewhere, about felling welcome, comfortable and able to chat honestly.

* **Staff keep you fully informed** 8 parents (more than a $^1/_4$) felt that staff did not keep them fully informed. Staff tended to agree, suggesting that this could be an area worth discussing with a view to improving. 7 parents felt that staff did not tell them about their child's good points, whereas the staff felt that they did - indeed they suggested that most of what they said to parents was positive. This may reflect a difference in emphasis, in that parents seemed to be looking for tendencies in their child's overall character and behaviour (eg. "good at sharing toys") whereas staff seemed to be reporting specific good behaviour (eg. "She's done a lovely painting this morning" or "She ate all her dinner up very nicely"). More dramatic were the differences in perception between parents and staff about informing parents where a child needs help. More than a 1/3 of parents felt this did not happen, whereas staff said they would always do this. Again, parents seem to want general advice. One gave the example, "I'd like to know, say on the whole he's awfully quiet and shy and needs encouraging to have a bit of confidence". Interestingly there was not a single parent (in the oral group) who felt staff would not positively offer help to a child experiencing difficulty - although 2 of the written responses (ie. 1/2) suggested lack of confidence. From the staff perspective, one pointed out that parents' views of what constitutes a difficulty or problem can vary quite considerably from their own.

Other parents are friendly The majority of parents felt that other parents were friendly, although one answering in the extreme column is a source of concern, even though again it might reflect a particular incident or poor experience.

I wish someone would explain why they play The responses to this statement showed a resounding success for the nursery's emphasis on early education through play. The fact that the children were "just" playing was denied by most parents, and very emphatically by a number of parents. This same response was reflected in the similarly resounding protest at the thought that "proper" education does not begin until primary school. Parents were convinced - and willing to argue - that this stage of education was very important. Some even suggested that perhaps it was more important since it was laying down the foundations for later learning. The 3 who agreed with the statement would probably be worth talking to. It would be interesting to know whether these had been parents who did not feel very involved with what went on in the nursery. From the very positive feedback (see elsewhere) on the "Wednesday group" such ideas of the value of nursery might well have emerged from there.

Comments on the parents' written responses (N=4) It must be remembered that the number is small. In general the pattern of responses was similar to that of the major sample, but was inclined to be rather less positive than those from the oral group. The exception to this concerned **parental support for the nursery**. They all said parents do show their support. This tendency to be rather less glowing is understandable in completing a written questionnaire, as opposed to sitting down and discussing where explanations and enthusiasms can be infectious! One parent felt that perhaps there was a problem about the children's behaviour in class, although even on this issue, the spread of responses was similar to the oral group's. 2 out of the 4 felt they would only talk to staff if there was a problem or crisis, a higher proportion than the other group, and unlike the oral sample, where everyone suggested they could speak honestly about anything which concerns them, one parent suggested that his was only "sometimes". Again, 2 of the 4 tell they were not kept fully informed about their child's progress, and in contrast with the main sample, 2 did not feel confident help would be offered to a child with a difficulty. A cause for thought is one respondent who suggested that he/she did not find staff approachable and taking time to listen. Another (the same person?) found the headteacher unapproachable and not helpful. Certainly, these views are at odds with the vast majority of parents. Particularly contrasting with the oral group, were the responses to whether the children just seemed to play about all the time. One respondent used the extreme column to register that some explanation was desirable for this state of affairs. Another agreed. The oral group had virtually all recognised the education value of nursery life.

B Staff Views (not already mentioned)

In true professional manner the staff were inclined to comment on strengths and weaknesses of approaches and to look for reasons for behaviour. The answer to the question "Do you explain your basic policies and approaches?" "in terms of",. "We try ... but" was typical of the difficulty of establishing yes/no answers. They did, however, demonstrate confidence in some important areas: no-one hesitated when asked whether action would be taken in response to a justified complaint, and in whether they saw parents as partners in the child's education. Ways of improving explanations to parents is a matter of on-going debate and one they feel was worthy of effort. They had not yet got all the answers, and methods of improving progress reports to parents and keeping them informed about the nursery in general must be examined. Meeting and talking to parents, whilst seen as important, did pose some practical difficulties, like the possibility of distracting attention from the children themselves. The idea of meeting parents outside school hours was not met with universal welcome by the staff or students, although there was clear enthusiasm for involving parents more with the children's activities in the nursery.

STAFF-HEADTEACHER DISCUSSION : ISSUES ARISING

Staff studied the initial comments made by the headteacher and agreed on the priorities indicated. They suggested that improving general **explanation of the part parents could play** in their child's education was a continuing, long-term goal, whereas setting out to **involve parents more with children's activities** in the nursery and better **information to parents** about the child's progress were something which should be tackled immediately and specifically.

Involvement of parents in children's activities at nursery was discussed. Opinion was divided as to whether this should be managed formally (with rota and clear, advance organisation) or more informally, with general invitations to parents to join in, offered. It was suggested that **both** approaches could be tried, according to individual staff preference. Staff who felt more comfortable with formal organisation might pilot that method, and those who preferred a drop-in style could try that. It was felt that constraining staff and parents to operate in a manner which did not suit them would be unproductive and not to be advised - particularly since there are no "right" or "wrong" methods in this context.

Another way of encouraging parents to understand something of their educative role, was to extend the successful "Wednesday class" to another day to involve more parents. The new class might helpfully involve some of the "experienced" parents from the first group to participate and share enthusiasm.

Better information to parents about child's progress was debated at some length. It was thought that it would be worth trying an invited individual parents meeting **once a term**, stressing the 2-way nature of such opportunities for exchange. In addition there should be some **agreed structure** to the conversation, so parents were getting similar sorts of information. Staff suggested Term I's exchange should focus mainly on the child's social development (together with any special points worth making) and in later terms, comments about language skills, self-help skills etc could be added.

The fact that the nursery is taking part in a joint endeavour with other local pre-school provision and primary schools, on PROFILING of children, to give clarity and continuity of feedback into the primary school must be helpful.

Another strategy which was considered worth trying again (well received in the past) was a **Parent's Playnight** where parents and carers could participate in some of the different activities common in the nursery, so leading to better understanding.

Afterwards, staff confessed how difficult it was to really think through and discuss views at the analytic level, and to forward plans - even though they could see there were distinct benefits!

Resource Implications

1 New Agreed format for **Parent Chat Record Sheet**

2 **Planning sheet** for staff to reflect the goals agreed with parents - to be worked in same categories as Parent Chat Record Sheet.

3 **Time** for staff to share outcomes of chats.

4 **Time** for staff to plan curriculum based on agreed goals.

5 Time for **in-service** to be dedicated to **our** work with **our** families.

AIMS 5 and 6

HEADTEACHER / RESEARCHER JOINT PLANNING MEETING :

AGENDA FOR ACTION

The headteacher, staff and researcher were pleased at the generally very positive responses to the questions and resolved to keep up the general good work. They agreed that the **Priorities for Attention were:**

i Better explanation to parents of the part they can play in the child's education. (Long-term goal).

ii Greater involvement of parents with children in nursery activities.

iii Improved and more detailed information to parents about their child's progress. (Immediate objective.)

Action : Priority 1

* Extend the successful "Wednesday group" to another day to involve more parents - Thursday afternoon group to be started involving 2 "experienced" parents from the Wednesday group (Cascade model).

* Make an effort to **evaluate** the effectiveness of such groups by asking for feedback, not only at the end of the course but follow up with parents of P1 children to find out how useful the discussions were felt to be and where improvements could be made.

* Complete the planned **video** of parents from the literacy group, working in **home** setting (both parents present where possible) **to initiate discussion** into what can be done by parents to extend language skills.

* Hold a Parent's Playnight so that through participation parents would grow in understanding about the nature of learning activities. - Early next session chosen to include "new" parents.

* Staff to try to chat about ways parents can extend the activities of the nursery in the home and offer ideas about what can be done.

Action : Priority 2

* Each member of staff to negotiate a method of working with parents and children in the nursery which suits herself and the relevant parents. (Uniformity not desirable - possible for different approaches since each member of staff is responsible for a specific group of children and work spaces are relatively distinct.) Note each to devise a method she feels **comfortable** with, and operationalise next term.

Action : Priority 3

* Instigate **termly** parent - staff chats stressing the 2-way nature of each exchange.

* Devise **structure** for the conversations - **topics** to be covered so that there is some element of uniformity in the information given to parents.

  eg Term 1 Comment on **Social development** and anything of special note.

  Term 2 Social development, Language skills and anything of special note.

  Term 3 Social development, Language, Self-help Skills and anything of special note.

* In talking to parents (even informally at nursery) share child's **strengths** and **areas where further attention is required** (presented in a supportive way).

* Evaluate the effectiveness of the joint PROFILING of pupils about to enter P1 and discuss whether this could form a basis for earlier parent-staff discussion.

On the Back Burner

* Discuss how nursery staff can encourage parents to offer time/skills/information, and how best to **use** the offers received.

Aim 7 to renegotiate (a) the policy statement

It was decided to share the process of devising an updated policy statement, and so the headteacher issued each nursery assistant with a set of questions to set her thinking, in preparation for a brainstorming session. (See Appendix 12) Armed with their notes and having duly prepared, the staff brainstormed each question, collating their answers to form the basis for further discussion. (See Appendix 13)

A policy statement evolved from the discussion (Appendix 14) and was redrafted, even when it had been hoped to be the final version (see Appendix 14b). Presumably constant improvement will be offered.

In the Pipeline - a "deformalised" policy statement in parent-friendly terms (illustrated).

Aim 7 To negotiate (b) recording procedures

i New record of **parent chats**, signed by both staff and parents at end of discussion. (See Personal Profile) A note of dates and attenders will be made. Non-attenders will be followed up.

ii A **video** will be made of the Parent Play night - and subsequent important shared events, to encourage parent discussion. Videos are kept of work in the nursery and these will inevitably eventually record parents working with the children.

iii A **loose-leaf folder** is to be kept in the Parents' Space, so parents can "sign in" when they have participated in nursery activities and even leave a note of what they thought. Dates will be recorded so a cumulative picture of parental involvement will be there to give pleasure and stimulate discussion. Photographs will be added whenever they are available. This will form a useful permanent record from which to study numbers of parents involved, the type of activity, times of heavier involvement etc whether it is always the same parents doing the same kinds of thing etc. Space for both parent and staff comment will offer an interesting double perspective.

iv Points from informal chats with parents (concerns, questions, achievements, with dates) will be added to the individual child's record by staff as and when they occur.

v Parent will sign the agreed final term profile for sending to P1.

Aim 7 To renegotiate (c) evaluation procedures

i At the end of each term's "chats" staff will **discuss** with parents not only what has been recorded but how valuable the term's work has been, bearing in mind how the goals on the recording sheet match general curriculum planning goals.

ii At the end of Term 2 parents will be asked to comment on the **value of the chats** themselves.

iii General success of the partnership will be judged by:
(a) monitoring informal feedback from parents
(b) the parental contribution to the Child's record (See No 1 of Appendix 15)
(c) staff judgement about willingness to share ideas, skills equipment and observations.

iv A more **formal evaluation sheet** to be completed by parents before the third 'chat' (ie the last one before the profile is submitted for primary school. (Appendix 20)

Aim 8 Addressing the Areas: Progress Report (One month after)

Priority Area 1 - Explanation of part parents can play

(a) Staff have discussed the importance of **informal chats** with parents and of asking about and extending activities experienced at home. They are all trying to keep this in mind when talking to parents.

(b) A section has been incorporated into the Parent Chat Record sheet to guide discussion on activities in the home. (See Appendix 15 Point 1)

(c) The idea of extending the 'Wednesday group' has been floated with members of the group.

(d) A family has been identified with whom to video the aspects of the literacy group's work. It is planned to video the parents, child and staff member working together in the nursery, first, followed by a shot of the child with parents in the home setting, extending the work.

(e) Plans for Parents' Play day or night next session floated. It is to be held around the October break.

Priority Area 2 - Involvement of parents with children in nursery activities

(a) The staff decided to begin with new entrants and their parents. Four sessions a week have been made available for parents with children at playgroup to come into the nursery (Tuesday or Thursday morning or afternoons) whilst the present nursery children are out on mini-bus trips. It is emphasised that parents STAY with their children. Whilst at the session the headteacher takes half the parents for a chat (leaving their children to be supervised by the other parents) and then the groups swap over. The headteacher has three definite messages to communicate:

i the importance of the Pupil Profile Record

ii the fact that (in conjunction with parents) plans are made of activities suitable to individual children and that records are kept. It is made clear that nursery is **not** just a case of "letting children play"

and

iii that child care and protection is one of the nursery's concerns and that children will be observed with this in mind.

Any question which may present itself will immediately be discussed with parents. There is then an opportunity for questions and exchange of information.

(b) Parent volunteers have been asked for outings. This has been very successful. The idea of a voluntary nursery helper, perhaps from the literacy group, has

been floated and awaits further discussion. Staff are deciding what method of involving parents in nursery activities suits their own way of working.

Priority Area 3 - Improved and more detailed information to parents about their child's progress.

(a) Once-a-term chats have been agreed by the staff for a pilot year.

(b) A flowchart to guide the conversation has been developed, with a brief sheet on which to record the conversation. (See Appendix 15) This is to be signed by parent and staff to clarify what has been covered and what areas are to be worked on during the next term.

(c) The aims of the chats are to:

i establish a dialogue with parents about their child
ii help the parents see themselves as partners in their child's education
iii offer to share ideas, skills and equipment for use at home
iv begin and maintain individual notes to plan child's experiences.

1.3 Procedure 1

The chats will be organised thus:

i A week will be identified **Parent Chat Week** each term and kept free of other happenings.

ii Each parent will be given a personal invitation to attend on a special day. (There will be one and a half days allocated to each group of ten children.) All groups will be seen in the same week. Posters to advertise chats displayed.

iii At the chat, staff will share their observations of the child's development so far, after listening to the parents observations, concerns and pleasures about their child.

iv At the end of the chat staff will agree, with parents, "progress points" or goals for the child for the term/weeks ahead, both for home and school.

v Staff will offer to loan parent any help or equipment required and inform parent of book, tape library and other help available.

vi Notes of the meetings will be held by individual staff and these will be discussed with colleagues and headteacher in the week following.

vii Using these notes, plans for the children will be made so shaping the curriculum on offer.

(d) The **Personal Profile** has continued to develop. Two years ago it was a simple form. (See Appendix 16) Now the agreed form, common to all the pre-school provision feeding into the local primary school is used. (See Appendix 17) Internally the staff are experimenting with a profile which covers the six broad domains of children's learning and development - investigating, representing, communicating, interacting, attitudes, reflecting. (Based on E M Greig's "Northern College of Education Nursery, Primary 1 Continuity".) They are stressing **strategies** rather than behaviour eg

classifying, patterning, predicting, making choices, speaking, gesturing, questioning, showing confidence. (See Appendix 18) The parents could be asked to look at the Domains Sheet and just say what occurs to them in any category. Then they would negotiate with staff what was to be recorded. They would be guided by the schedule in Appendix 19.

INTRODUCTION

The staff at Dunmore are always looking for ways to make the nursery school better, and they welcome parents comments about what is happening. We all know it's important for staff and parents to work **together** to make sure the child is happy and getting the most out of life.

Moray House College is looking at ways in which schools can take account of what parents think, so that's why we're sharing today. I know you can chat to the staff **any** day, but this is just a bit of special time when we can have a minute to think about our own Nursery, how we're doing and whether we can make things better. We know it's good. We want to find out what you're happy about and which bits together the staff and you can make better. So these are your, "How do you find it so far?" questions. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. It's just what you **think**.

DUNMORE NURSERY SCHOOL, BALLINGRY, FIFE

QUESTIONS TO PARENTS

MARCH 1992

GENERAL	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Do you think most children like being at the nursery?				
Do you feel generally, there is no problem about the children's behaviour in the class?				
Do you think staff generally treat children kindly and fairly?				
Do the children like the staff in general?				
Do you think the nursery school has a poor reputation in the community?				

Comments

PARENTS AND THE SCHOOL	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do you think most parents show support for the nursery?			
Have they explained to you what part you can play in your child's education?			
Would you talk to nursery staff only if there was a problem or crisis?			
If you complain about something, would you be sure of getting a sympathetic hearing?			
Do you think parents should be involved with the children's activities at the nursery school?			
Do you think there should be some parents' activities at the nursery school?			

PARENTS AND STAFF WORKING TOGETHER	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Do you feel happy and comfortable when you are at the nursery school?				
Do you get a chance to speak honestly about anything which concerns you?				
Does the nursery make good use of any time and skills you offer?				
Do they discourage questions and suggestions?				

YOUR CHILD	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do the staff keep you fully informed about your child's progress?			
Do they tell you about your child's good points?			
Do they let you know where you child needs help?			
Do you know that if your child has difficulty he/she will be helped?			

These are some things parents in other schools have said. We want to know how far you agree with them.

	Agree Very Much	Agree	Don't Agree	Don't Agree At All
I get a really nice welcome every day from the staff.				
I really feel they know my child as an individual.				
I know I can just ask if I need advice and help.				
Staff are approachable and make time to listen.				
I would like to be more involved with what goes on at the nursery.				
There's plenty for parents to do here.				
I wish someone would explain to me why they just seem to play about all the time.				
The other parents aren't very friendly.				
'Proper' education doesn't really begin until primary school.				
Staff let some children away with murder.				
The headteacher is approachable and helpful.				
Information from the nursery school could be improved.				

There may be a number of things about the nursery school which you would like to mention but which haven't been covered by the questions. If there are, please tell me or write them here for us.

Like, can you think of anything which would improve the nursery?

Have there been any ideas which have been tried which you thought were particularly good?

Thank you very much for your help.

J Arrowsmith
February 1992/CD/2

Appendix 2

DUNMORE NURSERY SCHOOL, BALLINGRY FIFE

QUESTIONS TO STAFF

Do you work in the classroom? ☐ How long here? ☐

or mainly outwith ☐

INTRODUCTION

You know I'm doing some research on involving parents in education. Every nursery and indeed, every school is always trying to find new ways of making their school better, and one way seems to be to **stop** for a moment, and say "How are we doing just now, and how can we improve?" To find out how we are doing, we have to **ask** those involved - staff and parents - some would say the children as well.

We're asking parents and staff similar kinds of questions to try to get an overall picture. This might also show us aspects to improve eg if you say you've explained something to parents, and they say they have not had an explanation, clearly further work is necessary! The nice thing is that it gives everyone a chance to say what they **do** appreciate as well.

We didn't want to ask all the staff together because it's **your** opinion we want. There are no right and wrong answers. The questions are structured - really just to save time. We could "chat" for ages. But here goes. Here are your "What do you think of it?" questions. Remember, we're focussing on parents and teachers working together to make the **child's** experiences the best it can be.

PARENTS AND THE NURSERY SCHOOL.	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do you think most parents show support for the nursery?			
Has school explained to parents its policies and basic approaches?			
Has school explained what part parents can play in their child's education?			
Do parents only get in touch if there is a problem or issue?			
Can parents be sure that action will be taken in response to a justified complaint?			
Do the parents of children with problems appreciate the help they get from school?			
Would you welcome opportunities to meet parents during nursery school hours?			
Would you welcome opportunities to meet parents outwith school hours?			
Would you welcome working with parents in the nursery school?			

PARENT-STAFF PARTNERSHIP	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Do you make a special effort to greet parents and welcome them into the nursery school?				
Do you see parents as partners in the child's education?				
Do you try to speak honestly to parents about anything which concerns you?				
Do you listen carefully to any matters of concern voiced by parents?				
Do you try to make use of any offers of help from parents?				
Do you discourage suggestions and questions from parents?				

PARENTS AND THEIR CHILD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Do you keep parents fully informed about their child's progress?				
Do you talk about the child's good points?				
Do you tell them where their child needs help?				
Do you try to involve parents when a child needs help?	Explain			

— Is there anything you've tried at nursery school involving parents which you think worked particularly well?

Any drawbacks/limitations?

Any suggestions for future developments?

J Arrowsmith
February 1992/CD/2

Appendix 3

DUNMORE NURSERY
RECORD KEEPING

Notes to Staff and Students

These notes are intended to help staff, old and new, and students understand what records and plans are for.

All records on children should be positive emphasizing what children can do, what they have achieved and should outline the support the child needs in order to progress.

1. A Profile on the child might include the following information:

   Activities the child enjoys.

   Ability to cope with new experiences: curiosity, motivation, imagingation, coping with fears, failure, problems, concentration.

   Physical Skills: use of tools, gross motor control, fine motor control, use of nursery space and equipment.

   Independence: ability to access and use nursery experience resources, people, organisational skills, (helping, tidying-up, carrying information from adult to adult).

   Confidence: where least/most confident, with whom, assertive/timid, needs approval, support.

   Relationships: can share, take turns, negotiate, care for, understand rules, other children's needs, control feelings, express feelings, anxiety, worry.

2. Another aspect of keeping records could be referring to child's achievements within the activities experiences or "curriculum" areas of the nursery. These might include: abilities in :

   Speaking and Listening : can ask questions, describe events in a sequence, tell an imaginative story, take a message, explain a process, remember and recall things from the past, negotiate verbally.

   Bi-lingual children may be among our children and we need to remember their ability with their own language at home, as well as in the nursery when determining language/listening skill/achievement.

   Reading and Writing - or Pre-Reading/Writing

   Interest in books, behaviour at story time, knows that words tell stories, can tell a story about a picture, asks about words in notices, books, interested in letters, writing own name, copying signs, can write own name, other words.

Maths - Numbers and Counting

Can sort, match, group and explain why.

Can make comparisons, size, height, texture.

Can use position words - under, behind, inside, outside, in, on top of, etc.

Can order graded sizes - beakers, cubes, chairs, dolls, teddies, and use the language, big, bigger, biggest, etc.

Can build with bricks and boxes, name solid and flat shapes, and describe them.

Can use numbers - one-to-one correspondence using home corner equipment, dolls, plates, cups, etc; can do simple addition and subtraction through songs and rhymes eg 5 currant buns, 10 green bottles.

Can recognise numbers in environment : house numbers, phone number, "2 can play", "I am 4", TV times.

Can put events into a time sequence - I get up, I have breakfast, I come to nursery etc.; knows what happens next at nursery.

Can make and discuss patterns.

Environmental Experiences

Can help care for nursery pets.

Can name some common wild flowers, trees, and garden flowers eg daisy, rowan, fir tree, rose, daffodil.

Can plant and care for seeds, eg cress, bean, sunflower, bulbs.

Can describe, name materials required for planting, eg compost, pots, watering can, labels, etc.

Can follow simple pictorial and verbal instructions for planting.

Can explain aspects of growth in appropriate language, eg root, shoot, stem, bud, leaves, flower, seed-head, etc.

Science: Can make and discuss :

Weather observations

Plant growth and seasonal changes

Can make predictions - "if the candle is lit the chocolate will melt", "the jelly will set in the fridge", "I wonder if ....."

Can explain or interpret events and happenings -
"that stone will sink because" , "it will turn to ice because", "if you put in ..... it will change to ....."

Can tackle a problem and find a solution
- using bricks
- using meccano
- working outside with big equipment.

Technology

Has experience of, how much experience of using tools and observing their effects on material
eg - sandpaper on wood
- grater on cheese

Making models - with junk material
- with construction (big blocks, bricks)
- with small construction (lego, meccano, mobilo)

Design of buildings, parts of articles, eg clock, radio, watch, telephone which has been taken apart.

Use of computer, cassette player, camera, microscope, magnifier, binoculars.

Aesthetic/Creative Experience

Interest in drawing, woodwork, clay, painting.

Involvement in music, drama, dance, P.E.

Ability to represent ideas using whole range of equipment imaginatively.

Stage of drawing and painting development (refer to 'Art and the Pre-School Child".)

3. It is hoped that things that a child is particularly good at, possibly in advance of the rest of the group, will be noted and provided for. In just the same way, an aspect or area in which a child needs additional support, practice or experience should be highlighted.

In each case there may be resource implications and these need to be addressed by staff, in consultation with H/T and possibly specialist staff.

Parents will want to be aware of their child's achievements in these areas. Discussion with parents may help staff to learn about learning that takes place at home, the skills and hobbies parents share with their children, and can lead to offers of help from parents which enrich our curriculum and extend the knowledge and interests of children and staff.

Appendix 4

(Shared between staff and parents before passing on to Primary School)

OBSERVATIONS

NAME **COMPLETED BY**

LANGUAGE **LISTENING**

BEHAVIOUR WITH CHILDREN **BEHAVIOUR WITH ADULTS**

FAVOURATE ACTIVITIES / INTERESTS

SITUATIONS WHICH UPSET **SPECIAL INFORMATION**

PLEASE DATE EACH ENTRY AND INITIAL

APPENDIX 5

16 January 1990

Mrs J Peden
Psychologist
Psychology Service
Old Schoolhouse
Lumphinnans

Dear Mrs Peden

.....

Today the parents of the above child asked about school enrollment for .....
The school concerned would normally be .....
The Parents, aware of ..... learning difficulties, would welcome an opportunity to discuss school placement with you in the near future.

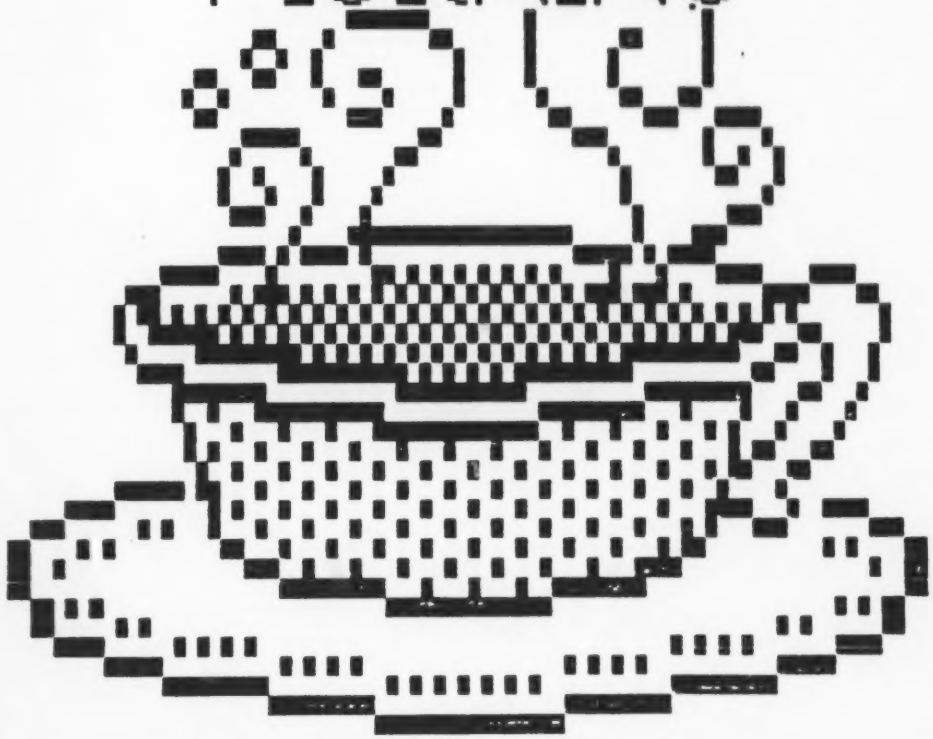
For my part, I would welcome a formal assessment of ..... in order that I can complete the second part of the return made to the Advisory Service earlier this session. It would be helpful if the Reports could be available by 23 February.

Yours sincerely

Dianne A Lamont

cc File
Parents
Mrs N Taylor

PARENT'S COFFEE MORNING



EVERY WED.
RAFFLE
ALL WELCOME

Appendix 6b

Come Along

Getting to know us.

Dear Parents, Friends and Child-Minders,

Please come to the Nursery at 10.30 or 2.30 to have a chat and a cup of tea with the staff who work with your child.

We'd like to show a video and tell you about the nursery.

Look forward to seeing you.

HEARD THE GOOD NEWS?

it's a

DEPARTMENT OF DENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH

Oral Hygiene

PROGRAMME

To keep your child's mouth healthy it is important to follow advice on good diet and eating habits and encourage a regular routine of good brushing using a fluoride toothpaste.

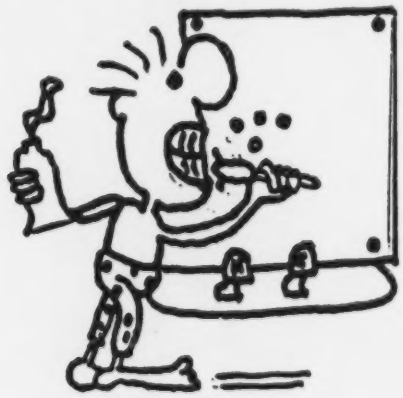
How can we

HELP?

Most children need assistance in cleaning their teeth properly and it is intended to begin a toothbrushing programme in your child's school. A member of the cental team shall visit routinely and with small groups of children she will demonstrate, advise and assist them in good cleaning methods. Each child shall be given their own personal toothbrush which will be kept at school.

Interested?

If you wish your child to participate in the programme please sign the slip below and return it to their teacher as soon as possible.



Name of child: .....

Signature of parent: .....

Dear

Dunmore Nursery Pre-Reading and Language Project

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the Reading and Language Project.

If your child is in the **am class** the first meeting for parents is in the nursery

on ..... at ..... am.

For a **pm child** the first meeting for parents is in the nursery

on ..... at ..... am.

Appendix 7

Dear

Please come with your mum or dad to the Nursery on

WEDNESDAY 12th JUNE at 10.00 am/2.00 pm

You can stay and play until 11.00 am/3.00 pm

Your mum or dad can meet the staff who will look after you when you start in the Nursery.

There will be tea for mums and dads and juice for you.

Please come because we think you will like playing at Dunmore Nursery.

Look forward to seeing you on WEDNESDAY 12th JUNE at 10.00/2.00

Appendix 8

Dear

would like to come to your house to talk to you and your mum about you starting at Dunmore Nursery.

can come on at

Please let us know if you will not be in on that day.

You are welcome to call in at the nursery any time.

Look forward to seeing you soon

Dunmore Nursery School.

Thank you for coming to the Parents' Evening.
We hope you have enjoyed seeing your children at 'work'.

Will you please fill in a few answers for us about how you like what the nursery has to offer you and your children. It will help us to know the children better and to give you and them more of the things you like ---- if we can!

Thanks again for coming tonight and thanks for filling in the answers.

At nursery my child really enjoys

I send my child to nursery because

At nursery I want my child to be able to

The thing he/she doesn't do/get that I wish he/she did do/get is

The nursery session is too long, too short.
I would like it to be

Do you think nursery gets the children ready for school?

YES NO

If yes, what is the most important thing?

If no, what should we be doing?

QUESTIONNAIRE TO PARENTS:

1. Some things that your child can do at nursery are:

Painting, Water, Cooking, Animals, Glueing, Bricks,
Growing, Sand, House, Puzzles, Music Books

Which does your child enjoy?

1. 2. 3.

4. 5. 6.

2. Some things that your child can learn at nursery are:

To trust others, To bake, To ask questions,
To enjoy books, To draw, To sing rhymes/songs
To listen To share, To play with others

Which do you think he has learned? ☐ ✓

3. Has he learned anything else?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 1:

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
1. *I bake with my child at home.*			
2. *My child asks me to bake.*			
3. *My child has/had dough at home.*			
4. *My child helps me with cooking.*			
5. *My child tells me about nursery cooking.*			
6. *I see my child playing at pretend cooking.*			
7. *I would like to join a nursery cooking session.*			
8. *Is there anything else about cooking at home or nursery you would like to tell me about.*			

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 2:

You replied to the first interview.

1. *Can you tell me why you let the children help you so much with cooking?*

2. *What do the children get out of the cooking sessions.*

3. *What do you enjoy most about these times.*

4. *Do you set out to teach the children particular things in the cooking sessions.*

ACTIVITY : MAKING CHOCOLATE CRISPIES

WHAT IS INVOLVED

EQUIPMENT	LANGUAGE	SKILLS	CONCEPTS
Cooker	*Nouns - equipment*	*Measuring*	*Weight*
Bowls	*Verbs - stirring*	*Estimating*	*Size*
Spoon	*- melting*	*Co-ordination*	*Time*
Paper Cases	*- mixing*	*Organisation*	*Change*
Pan	*Amounts - spoonful*	*Matching*	
Water	*- more*	*Recognising*	
Chocolate	*- less*	*Name*	
Rice Crispies	*- fill it up*		
Aprons	*Questions - is it ready*		
Oven Gloves	*- is it sticking*		
Washing-up Bowl			
Washing-up Liquid			
Tea Towel			
Dish Cloth			

OBSERVATION SHEET 1:

OBSERVATIONS DURING ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY

QUESTIONS		DEMONSTRATES		TAKES THE LEAD	
To Adult	To Child	To Adult	To Child	Without Adult	With Another Child

OBSERVATION SHEET 2:

LANGUAGE USED DURING ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY

Naming (NOUNS)	*Doing (VERBS)*	*ADJECTIVES ETC.*

CHECKLIST

ACTIVITY _____

CHILD _____

LOOKING

LISTENING

HELPING

SHOWING

ASKING

TELLING

COUNTING

REMEMBERING

SHARING

THINKING

OTHER

Appendix 12

DEVELOPING A POLICY ON PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN NURSERY

Stage 1 - Structured Staff Discussion

Rationale	Why?
Aims	What?
Methodology	How?
Evaluation	Checks/Evidence
Resources	Required to do the work

1 We have a good reputation with parents in Ballingry

Why is this?

Write down 5 reasons

i

ii

iii

iv

v

2a What do we **do** that has gained us this reputation?

Think of: i You as an individual

ii Us as a staff

2b **How** do we give parents, grand parents, carers etc the message that we work **in partnership with** them?

Give examples

i

ii

iii

iv

Use names if this helps focus what you think.

3 What do **you** have to prove that **you** have a partnership with parents? - Evidence.

i

ii

iii

What do **we**, as a staff have as evidence?

i

ii

iii

4 What do **we use** to **help us** in our work with parents?

i

ii

iii

What else would we like to strengthen the partnership

i

ii

iii

5 In your own words write down how you feel about **present** parent partnerships and how **you** would **like** them **to change**.

How will we achieve the desired changes?

DEVELOPING A POLICY ON PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN NURSERY

Stage 1 - Structured Staff Discussion

Rationale	Why?
Aims	What?
Methodology	How?
Evaluation	Checks/Evidence
Resources	Required to do the work

1 We have a good reputation with parents in Ballingry
Why is this?
Write down 5 reasons

Why

Groups	√√
Welcoming	√√
Make Home Visits	√
Parent Chats	√
Fund-raising	
"Special Person" for each child	
Available	√√
Treat children as individuals	√
We are Experienced	
We are "kent faces"	√√
Co-operation	
Independent of a school	

2a What do we **do** that has gained us this reputation?
Think of:
i You as an individual
ii Us as a staff

What
Available
Listen
Acceptance
Friendly
Smiling

Work together as a team
We know everybody, parents know everybody
Happy atmosphere
Links to other agencies
There is a balance of experience/skills
We share

We work on knowledge of individual child
We value the parent/child relationship
We are interested in the parent/child relationship

2b **How** do we give parents, grand parents, carers etc the message that we work **in partnership with** them?

Give examples

How

Positive comments on child's development	√√
Sharing nursery "work" with parents eg cooking	√√
'Non expert' parent style valued (parent helpers)	
Range of activities, socialising	
Establishing relationships early	
Home links	
Support from other agencies	
Record-keeping, planning	
Events	
Asking questions, showing interest	√

Use names if this helps focus what you think.

3 What do **you** have to prove that **you** have a partnership with parents? - Evidence.

What evidence do we have?

Trust - confidence parents have in us	√√√√		
Personal approaches to parents	√	Reassurance	√
Gifts, cards			
Offers of help/books, equipment			
Good track record			
Parents keep coming with other children	√		
Parents come back after school begins	√		

What do **we**, as a staff have as evidence?

Good attendance
Frank discussion
Record of previous parent work
Affection from children

4 What do **we use** to **help us** in our work with parents?

What do we use in our work with Parents
Children
Parents' interest in their own child
Experience of child development
Personal sensitivity to child
Making time to listen, care, help

Outside help
- Psychologist
- WEA
- Community Education Worker
- Health Visitor
- Outreach Workers - Lauder College

Workshops, In-service, Reading.

What else would we like to strengthen the partnership

What else would help us?
More work with some parents/children in nursery and at home
Family worker
Space
Reorganisation of time

5 In your own words write down how you feel about **present** parent partnerships and how **you** would **like** them **to change**.

Relationships
At present

Good	√
Free/easy	√
Purposeful	√
Good example	

How will we achieve the desired changes?

In the future
Joining in nursery work (for parents)
Rota of parent helpers
Better links to S/W Dept
Improvements in our system of involving parents and planning for their involvement
Recognition of the importance of the "Special Person" by other Agencies
List to each Health Visitor of the children in each group
Parent contributing to record keeping

DUNMORE NURSERY
PARENT/STAFF PARTNERSHIP POLICY

1. Rationale

In our view, partnership is about equal human worth and those who work together, the complementary skills and knowledge of parents and staff and a shared interest in the care and education of children.

Partnership, we hope will encourage a positive working relationship across the boundaries between all the groups we work with, ie. between professionals, between staff and parents, between staff and children and between parents and their children.

Partnership does not "just happen". It is a way of working which evolves through stages. These stages apply to all the partnerships we try to encourage and sustain. We believe that parents have a right to be consulted to contribute to decisions which affect their children. This is stated clearly in Education Act 1986 and Children's Act 1991.

2. Our aims are:

2.1 To develop confidence skill and knowledge in staff and parents so that they maximise their potential for working with and caring for children, and in themselves as learners.

2.2 To develop an ability in staff and parents to complement each other's role.

2.3 To develop supportive systems for families with young children through community units and activities.

2.4 to enable some parents to train and act in a staff helper, paraprofessional role.

2.5 To work together to improve children's learning experiences, knowledge and competence.

2.6 To share our experiences of partnerships in our local community, among our colleagues and with Advisers and Directorate in our Region.

3. Methodology

We employ a range of formal procedures and informal strategies to promote our partnership ideal.

These include:

Home visiting and Play-group outreach.
Stay and Play sessions.
Parent evenings.
Parent/Staff chats.
Parent rotas for nursery and on outings.
Parent/Staff planning sessions.
Parent/Staff profiling sessions.
Regular newsletters.
Organised notice board.
Staff/Parent diary.
Staff/Parent workshops.
Parent modular courses with local college.
Video recordings of some of the above and of children at nursery.

4. Evaluation

Our partnership policy will be considered to be effective if:

4.1 All partners, parents, staff, other workers in the community report a growth in their confidence and ability to work and learn together, and independently.

4.2 The above contribute regularly to the Parents Area Diary, and to planning play and profiling sessions.

4.3 Parent contributions, offers of help are accepted by staff and implemented for the benefit of all.

4.4 The nursery experience on offer is seen to reflect the culture and competences of the children and parents.

4.5 Children are seen to grow and develop through quality interactions with adults in their community.

4.6 Parents feel able to provide a secure, stimulating life-style for their own child.

Resources

In Dunmore there are three main resource implications for implementing this policy. These are:

Time
Space
People

Time as a resource

Nursery Staff, apart from the Headteacher have at the most 1/2 an hour non-child contact time per day, (no P.D.T. or P.A.T. commitment). Releasing staff to work meaningfully with parents requires paid staff training and this can only be done by adjusting the staff/child ration.

Time can sometimes be found, but not guaranteed, when there is a period of high child absence. Therefore, planned training sessions are limited to in-service days.

Space as a resource

There is no space dedicated entirely or solely to Parents in the nursery. Parents use the Dining Area but this is a thoroughfare to staff room, toilet, laundry/shower room and adjacent to the kitchen.

People as a resource

there are dedicated people within the school and its community who are the current forces and future potential supporters of our partnership ideal.

These people include former and current parents, staff members, health visitors, community education workers. Psychology service workers, Lauder College staff, playgroup staff and Fife Play partnership colleagues.

We are fortunate that we are supported by an adviser and directorate who up-hold the partnership model within our current operational limitations.

Appendix 14 b

DUNMORE NURSERY

PARENT/STAFF PARTNERSHIP POLICY

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Partnership, we hope will encourage a positive working relationship across the boundaries between all the groups we work with, ie between professionals, between staff and parents, between staff and children and between parents and their children.

Partnership does not "just happen". It is a way of working which evolves through stages. These stages apply to all the partnerships we try to encourage and sustain. We believe that parents have a right to be consulted to contribute to decisions which affect their children. This is stated clearly in Education Act 1986 and Children's Act 1991.

2 Our aims are:

2.1 To develop confidence skill and knowledge in staff and parents so that they maximise their potential for working with and caring for children, and in themselves as learners.

2.2 To develop an ability in staff and parents to complement each other's role.

2.3 To develop supportive systems for families with your children through community units and activities.

2.4 To enable some parents to train and act in a staff helper, paraprofessional role.

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Regular newsletters
Organised notice board
Staff/Parent diary
Staff/Parent workshops
Parent modular courses with local college
Video recordings of some of the above and of children at nursery

4 Evaluation

Our partnership policy will be considered to be effective if:

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4.5 Children are seen to grow and develop through quality interactions with adults in their community.

4.6 Parents feel able to provide a secure, stimulating life-style for their own child.

Resources

In Dunmore there are three main resource implications for implementing this policy. These are at present,

Time: Child contact-time dedicated to staff development and not domestic tasks.

Space: Efficient use of space
Increased storage space
Separate space for parents.

People: Increase in staff
A teacher or social work/community ed worker.

Space as a Resource

There is no space dedicated entirely or solely to Parents in the nursery. Parents use the Dining Area, but this is a thoroughfare to staff room, toilet, laundry/shower room, and adjacent to the kitchen.

People as a Resource

There are dedicated people with the school and its community who are the current forces and future potential supporters of our partnership ideal.

These people include former and current parents, staff members, health visitors, community education workers, psychology service workers, Lauder College staff, playgroup staff and Fife play partnership colleagues.

We are fortunate that we are supported by an adviser and directorate who up-hold the partnership model within our current operational limitations.

Dunmore Nursery
May 1992

Review - May 1993

Welcome to Dunmore Nursery

Your child will be in_____group with 9 other children.

A lunch is available any day, by arrangement, if you have an appointment, or a problem at home.

Parents contribute 75p every week on a Monday if possible to the Snack fund. This allows us to give the children a snack with their milk

To help us train the children to wipe their noses a box of tissues each term is very welcome.

With your help, we can help your child to

Play
Share
Concentrate
Be Independent
Care for animals and plants
Develop skills with scissors, pencils, paints and toys such as Lego and sticklebricks
Enjoy messy play like sand, water, dough and gardening
Listen

PARENTS AND THE NURSERY

Staff value parent interest in the work of the nursery for the children.

We also have activities for parents eg

Coffee/Tea available every day in the Parent's Area

(Picture of a teacup)

We run courses for parents on

- Cookery
- Helping your child to read
- Open University

We take parents on trips to

- The Library
- Exhibitions
- Places of interest
- Holiday weekends

We want and need parents to help us on trips for the children

(picture of a minibus)

FUND RAISING

Every year parents make suggestions for fund-raising events like

Sponsored Walk
Christmas Fair
Coffee Evening & Social
Raffle
Family Fun Day

The money is used to pay for outings and special projects like our Tape/Book Library.

Tell us your ideas.

HOW YOU CAN HELP THE NURSERY

Parents can help us a lot.

Please let us know if you can show the children your pets.

If you can mend bikes, repair wooden toys.

Are you good at sewing, baking, growing things, telling stories, organising things?

Extra hands are always welcome.

DUNMORE NURSERY SCHOOL

Kirkland Avenue Ballingry

Ballingry 860 - 284

Appendix 15

Child's Name

Staff Record of Parent Chat

1 My child enjoys these things with me/family (Parent)

1 4

2 5

3 6

2 Your child enjoys these things with us at Nursery (Staff)

1 4

2 5

3 6

3 I would like him to try to (Parent)

1 because

2 because

3 because

4 We will try to help him to (Staff)

1

2

3

Notes - overleaf

Date:
Parent:
Staff:

Parent mentioned/discussed

1 **Date**

I mentioned/discussed

1 **Date:**

Appendix 16

All about me

My name is

My birthday is

The people in my family are

I would like you to know that I am good at

I sometimes am upset if

I need help to do things like

I have had help to do things like

I have had help from

I am looking forward to school because

My ..... would like to tell you that

Nursery Profile

Personal (Home and Nursery)

1 Significant family, special friends, special interests.
2 Medical information, involved specialists and services, relevant reports.
3 Anything likely to cause problems for the child at school eg toilet training, attendance, dietary restrictions, restricted dress, activities.
4 Any other language spoken fluently by the child.

Social Behaviour and Play

1 Play and co-operation with others (adults and children).
2 Perseverance at a self selected task, concentration span.
3 Ability to work independently, evidence of independent behaviour.
4 Activities particularly enjoyed at nursery, special interests, expression through imaginative play, art, craft, music, movement.

Body Co-ordination

1 Manipulative skills.
2 General body co-ordination.

Simple Mathematical Ideas - Evidence noted during play

1 Able to sort, match, classify, order.
2 Problem solving in real situations - construction/cooking/design and making.

Language

Listening	1	Listens to story, responds and recalls.
	2	Able to follow a simple instruction, answer a simple question.
Talking	1	Articulation, spontaneous language.
	2	Use of language to recall, predict, reason, express ideas and negotiate.
	3	Able to sustain a simple conversation (talk with others, listen to others).
Reading	1	Interest in books, enjoyment of reading time with an adult, handles books properly.
	2	Able to interpret illustrations, use questions to gain information.
	3	Tries to read to other children, awareness of print, names parts of a book (cover, page, word), uses left to right eye movements.
Writing	1	Development of detail in drawing, painting.
	2	Connects spoken and written word, tries to write.

Environmental Experiences

1 Awareness of environment - looking/listening, collecting, curiosity, sharing things, staying safe.

2 Observation of changes eg in weather, season, in substances during cooking, baking or when adding liquids.

3 Outings.

Nursery Profile

Personal
Social Behaviour and Play
Body Co-ordination
Simple Mathematical Ideas
Language
Environmental Experiences

Appendix 18

Records Formative/Summative

1 Domains of Children's Learning and Development which we observe and plan for:

Investigating

Does you child know about classification

patterns/routines/

predicting what will happen

observing

"what if" situations

generalizing

Using strategies

give examples of your child:

using and applying tools and techniques

investing tools and techniques

making choices

Representing

Has your child experience of:

making models

using symbols

role playing

2 Domains

Representing cont

Imaginative play

mime/imitation

dance

story making

Communicating
Tell us about your child and

speaking

gesturing

storying

listening

producing or receiving written messages (real or pretend)

Interacting
Tell us about your child:
what he uses to help communicate (facial gesture, looking away)

what he uses to help communicate with you about

how he communicates

Attitudes
Is your child a

questioning child

persistent child - a trier

confident child

happy child

Appendix 19

Profile and Record of Competence and Experience at Start of Nursery

For Parents

As my child starts at Dunmore Nursery I think of him/her as:

1 (Blank for individual idea)

2 Happy doing

3 Good at

4 Best friends with

5 Needing help to

6 Interested in

Appendix 20

Evaluation by Parents

Before the third parent chat the last before school profile, parents will be asked to complete an Evaluation Sheet for their child's Nursery experience.

Format might be

My child at Nursery .....

(child's name)

At first my child was

I tried to help to ..... to

and ..... learned how to

This was good for him/her because

The Nursery staff helped ..... to

Together we have helped to

I am glad that ..... came to Dunmore because
or
I am sorry that ..... came to Dunmore because

Signed .....

Date .....

Moray House Institute of Education
Heriot-Watt University

Parent-Teacher Collaboration Project
Case Study:
Blairhall Primary School (Nursery)

Phase 2 1991/92
Monitoring the Progress

CONTENTS

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PARENTS AND TEACHERS WORKING TOGETHER

IN NURSERY SCHOOLS AND CLASSES

Background

Improved parent teacher communication and partnership is the explicit aim of current legislation School Boards (Scotland Act 1988). This is the logical development from repeated reports and research notes, stressing the importance in educational terms of parents and teachers improving shared understanding and working together. Although there is plenty of well-documented argument for the need to co-operate, there has been less concentration on examining the step-by-step process necessary, in particular schools and on the requirement for those involved to develop monitoring techniques necessary for constant modification and improvement of practice.

In 1988 an initial investigation was made in a sample of Edinburgh primary schools into "good practice" in a variety of settings. It was made clear that each school was unique and relationships had to be built up between the particular people involved over a period of time. Nevertheless there were some "good ideas" which could usefully be shared to offer suggestions to schools to stimulate their own discussion and spark off new ideas, These, together with some basic approaches for workshops for parents and teachers were published in "Primary Workshop Notes : Parents and Teachers working together".

Stage 2 involves engaging in action research in a small sample of nursery schools to focus on the actual **process** of strengthening and improving relationships, whether the school is relatively inexperienced or well down the avenue of parent-teacher collaboration. It is recognised that the steps taken might be very small and the process of consolidation and improvement slow. Nevertheless the effort is acknowledged as worthwhile by those involved.

Improvement seems to depend on careful monitoring of what is going on and brief but efficient recording of what has been tried, together with some evaluation. It requires a clear statement of where the school is at the outset, together with profile of progress.

The aim of the research in each school, is to provide a brief profile of ongoing developments, with monitoring data offering some evaluation of the methods already tried. Pointers for future development in the specific context will be looked for.

Perhaps, more importantly, the research aims to establish a critical approach in staff and parents as they move forward in partnership in their own setting, so that evaluation of each new step becomes second nature and honest exchange becomes deeper than exchanging pleasantries or sharing specific problems about a child. There is a commitment to constant improvement and development.

The Study

Devising a profile of ongoing development and monitoring progress clearly can not be achieved by a "snapshot" visit to a nursery school. It was felt to be important to build up a relationship with the staff, parents and children in the nursery class over a period of time so that progress was a shared endeavour. It was decided to conduct two case studies one of which is Blairhall Nursery Class. The study began with the researcher simply being involved in a normal nursery morning's activities, gradually getting to know the children and the staff. It was decided to use an informal conversation style of gathering information and so structured interviews were used with parents and staff. There were ten specific aims to give the study direction, although these marked a progression in stages of development and were not tackled simultaneously.

The Aims in Blairhall Primary (Nursery Class) were:

i To establish the **nature and extent of parent-teacher partnership** at the outset of the project, from both staff and parents' perspectives.

ii To clarify present **policy** on parent-teacher partnership and the methods of implementing this policy.

iii To examine the current methods of **recording** initiatives and ongoing work where staff and parents work together.

iv To identify the **procedures for monitoring and evaluating** any initiatives invoiving parents and staff together.

v To identify **areas for development** or **proposed initiatives** from both parents' and staff's perspectives.

vi To draw up an initial **list of areas for development** which should be addressed, (ordered according to priority) and **ideas to be tried.**

vii (If necessary) to renegotiate:
the policy statement,
recording procedures
evaluation procedures

viii To address the first area for development.

ix To record what happens.

x To monitor and evaluate what happens.

The methods used were initial group discussion with parents, interviews with staff, scrutiny of current relevant documents and continuing dialogue between researcher, staff and parents. New procedures and policy statements emerged as appropriate

Background to the Nursery Class

Blairhall is a small rural primary school with twelve children in the nursery class (1991/92). When the study began (January 1992) the ages of the children ranged from three years to four years ten months. The nursery teacher in charge and experienced nursery nurse are joined by students from a nearby college on several days. The catchment area is Blairhall and the surrounding farms, although a number of parents exercise their right of choice under the parents' charter and bring their children from neighbouring Comrie and Carnock. Blairhall itself is a traditional mining community where extended family networks are the norm. Children and parents therefore know each other very well before ever the children came to school.

The nursery has one large room, with separate cloakroom area large enough to hold a table and a dozen or so chairs., There is space to play outside, although the surface of breaking asphalt has to be covered with groundsheets. Tyres filled with plants help to make the area attractive and time has been spent tending the garden The nursery class can book the school minibus for trips.

See Appendix A for fact sheet.

Aim 1a **- to establish the nature and extent of parent-teacher partnership from the staff and parents' perspectives**

The Parents' Perspective

Because numbers are small and contact is frequent, the nursery school relies to a great extent on oral communication; the written form is not the preferred method of contact in this area. It was decided to tap into parents' views first by **group discussion** at an invited coffee morning, which included a little sale in aid of nursery funds. An important feature was that families were able bring their under nursery school age children with them, since baby-sitting is known to be a problem. Staff made the invitation very clear, reinforcing it when the family brought the child to school in the mornings and redirecting attention the large cheery posters advertising the occasion. Curiosity was aroused in that the families were told there was going to be a member of staff from Moray House Institute, interested in talking to parents, although they did now know exactly what about.

Attendance was good, especially in view of the fact that a number of children were off nursery that day because of a flu epidemic. Ten adults were present , although not all were parents of the children at nursery. One mother brought **her** mother (who had a connection with the nursery going back forty years). As it happened, all who attended were women, although some fathers and grandfathers regularly drop and collect the children. Perhaps the thought of a coffee morning was too much for men! (Pie and a pint in the local might have been more enticing). There was no reluctance to share ideas and indeed the group could have continued much longer than the hour set aside.

The Parents' Views

The conversation followed the schedule offered in Appendix 1

The parents and relatives who came to the coffee morning were enthusiastic about parents being involved with nursery school activities, being quick to point out that such sharing was not a new thing; there was a whole tradition of local parents regularly chatting to staff, helping out with play, sewing, baking, story-reading, accompanying trips and so on. Indeed, they felt that in a small school such as this, this closeness, once established, was never lost and that the children felt the benefit throughout the nursery and primary stage of education. The only problem they identified in this connection was that it made the transition to secondary school, with its seeming cold impersonality the harder for children to cope with successfully. Members of the group whose link with nursery went back over a number of years, reminisced about weekly coffee mornings (which all present agreed would be worth resurrecting). They used to take it in turns to buy a packet of biscuits and each would pay a small contribution which went towards nursery funds. They said they would particularly like it if infant teachers could pop in sometimes and maybe have a cup of coffee with them, since this helped them to get to know each other. There was considerable debate about the definite need to be able to bring younger children along as well, since there would be no one to mind them at home.

The parents readily agreed with each other that it was important for parents to feel part of their child's education, and they felt it was beneficial to the child to know that parents understood and shared what was going on. They believed it was particularly important for parents to stay on the premises when wee ones first began nursery, since it helped to make them feel secure, either to have a parent in the room or "just through the door".

The group suggested that in places where parents did not join in activities, it was not because they did not care or want to be involved, but probably because they were "a wee bit scared", they did not feel welcome or "there was not a nice feeling about the school". (Some had experienced this in other places). On the other hand, they agreed, there were perfectly good practical reasons, like parents having to work, or being tied with younger ones, which would prevent them. Non involvement did not mean lack of caring.

The question about how the parents actually found out about the nursery and what was expected, was seen by the parents as virtually redundant. Word of mouth was the means of communication. They had "always" known about the nursery. It was part of the community; they had usually visited at some point and certainly had chatted to other mums. If they had not been aware of it, there was a notice in the shops. Anyway "all you have to do is come up to the school and get a form". If there was anything they were not sure of, then, (as now) they asked each other. (This point is worth exploring with the "Parents' Charter" parents, none of whom was present.) The parents appreciated the visit(s) to the nursery before the child started "properly" and they said there was plenty of explanation then and "you could ask all the questions you wanted".

Parents did feel it was a good idea to work with staff both in the classroom and outwith the school. They saw "going in to help" as a normal part of being a nursery mum and tended to "just get on with it". They did like going on trips with the children, and spoke at length of a particularly joyful visit to the local supermarket, where they had watched pizza being made.

The parents were invited to talk about any experience or ideas they had had which were particularly valuable and they mentioned the pleasure of sharing the birthday of a child, being able to come into the nursery and make a cake. Similarly they had enjoyed cake making at Christmas and they talked a lot about the recent Christmas lunch. Although they appreciated the idea of a "special time" with their nursery aged children, they would have preferred an invitation to the whole family, including pre-nursery children because of the enormous problems of finding cover for them. They would have been content with a less lavish lunch if they could have shared something simple with all the children.

There was a general feeling that staff kept parents well informed about how the children were progressing although it was voiced that they probably said less about areas where the child needed help and encouragement than about the good things. Because parents knew the staff well, especially the nursery nurse who had been at the school for a number of years, they found chatting easy and they would ask questions any time when they needed to. Staff were always ready to listen.

When pushed in the area of suggestions for improvements the parents were loyally inclined to say the nursery was "just fine" as it is. However, they did say they would like to have more Jumble Sales, because they were pleasurable and raised a little money for the nursery. They felt a regular coffee morning could usefully be re-established especially if the younger children could be brought along too; this would mean establishing a creche. In addition, the number of trips outwith school could perhaps increase, but **not** they clarified "dramatic" or expensive trips; the children were pleased to go anywhere locally and did not need to be taken far. It was the pleasure of getting out which was important.

Aim 1b The Staff Perspective

The two members of staff were spoken to separately. An informal conversation technique was used, since the researcher had already spent some time with the staff whilst working with the children. Although a schedule was used (see appendix 2) there was plenty of opportunity to explore issues and move beyond the specific answers. The questions asterixed in the schedule (see Appendix 2) were only put to the nursery teacher.

The nursery teacher has been in post for three years and is enthusiastic about involving parents with the child's education. The statement in her policy declaration reads:

> "We seek to maintain an open door policy so that parents are always welcome. We value their contributions and their insights and we try to share with them their child's growing awareness and skills."

There is not a separate stated policy and perhaps this could be spelt out in a little more detail. In addition, it was suggested that maybe a little "deformalised" booklet for parents and children might be useful to explain some basics about expectations at nursery eg a cartoon leaflet reminding parents of such things as the helpfulness of easy-to-change soft shoes for nursery. This could then be read by parents with the child to help prepare the child for starting nursery.

A running record of everything which happened at the nursery was kept by the nursery teacher in daily diary form, but information on parent involvement was not held separately. Again it might be useful to abstract this information and maybe have it available for parents to see. Already the staff shared photographs of events at the nursery with parents, and indeed parents often came and brought the photographs they themselves had taken.

Additional information was available in the file of posters which were kept, which helped maintain a record of events (see appendix 3 and 4) for example. Given the traditions of the area, the teacher works on building up good personal relationships rather than a lot of documentation. The wisdom of this is reflected in the fact that most families like to deal with school directly or send a message through friends/neighbours rather than phone or write. The staff begin to develop good relations early by welcoming parents with very young children on various occasions, so that they get used to the idea of the nursery. When a child is old enough, families are invited to come and visit. Five Friday afternoons are made available and each child, accompanied by a member of the family comes for either the first two or the second two weeks. Both halves of the incoming group meet on the fifth week. The teacher makes a point of chatting to the parents/caretakers at each visit, so that they have had three opportunities for dialogue and question-raising before ever the child joins the nursery. By that time both staff and parents feel more comfortable with each other so the formal filling in of the enrollment form (see appendix 5) is nothing like the formal thing it might seem from the objective form. Later on, matters are talked about again as they crop up so explanation and discussion are the natural methods of exchange of information. In cases of a reluctant nursery member, the teacher may visit the child's home, as indeed she does for other reasons if the need arises, such as for illness or bereavement. Personal contact is always important.

The teacher stresses to parents (and to students who are placed in the nursery) the fact that the staff and parents work as a **team**, and that students are a part of that team of caring adults when they are there. Conversation between the different members is always encouraged. The teacher has built up her way of working with parents and staff over years of experience, since she confesses that at her time of teacher education, relationships with parents were only really dealt with fairly academically.

Welcoming parents at the beginning of each session is, of course, given a high priority, and there is always a member of staff available to have a word. Any parent who has not been seen for a while will be made specially welcome : if, for example, it is a working mum's day off, then she will be invited to stay a while if she chooses. Seeing the nursery functioning, and indeed, getting involved in some of the activities is a good way of encouraging family members to take an interest, and most parents will have done this, at least initially.

Some parents stay more regularly to help with playing and story reading. Some assist by sending in materials for nursery use, and some provide information, say in preparation for selecting places to visit. For example, if they have enjoyed a family trip to the zoo, safari park or an alternative, they bring the leaflets with information about cost, opening times etc to suggest possibilities for nursery work. Most parents show an interest in the different aspects of nursery life and many stay to chat about family issues and matters of general concern rather than restricting conversation to narrow nursery affairs. Parent support in general is an aspect of the nursery staff role, which though very demanding is felt to be valuable. Some of the initiatives at the nursery have been directly as a result of suggestions by parents eg sponsoring children to wear a variety of colours (see appendix 6).

Whilst most new ideas the nursery have tried have been well received by parents, of particular value have been the shared trips, the shared Friday afternoon activities and the library opportunities each Friday lunch time where parents are invited to come early for their child in order to choose a book together. This is a pleasurable aspect of parent education. Evaluation of shared activities is ongoing and informal. There is no method of recording evaluations made, currently. Again, word of mouth, and, "Do you remember when we ..." are the normal procedures.

Looking to the future, the teacher would like to see the nursery moving towards becoming a community nursery; a community resource where families with pre-school children would feel welcome and comfortable, where they would receive support when necessary and share joys. A proper creche facility would be provided with carers who were not simultaneously having to keep an eye on nursery age children and so feel a bit split in their loyalties - perhaps older pupils of the local High School or young adults on child care work experience could assist here. The teacher claims that this is not an impossible pipe dream since it could be worked towards in practical small steps, perhaps by beginning to modify the outside area, so that in good weather it would be used by families as well. She could envisage a part safely partitioned with moveable barriers so building on the happy tradition being developed last summer when parents helped to take toys outside but when the limitation of no really safe area for tiny children restricted what could be done. In addition, the outside area would have to be resurfaced since the present breaking asphalt is not safe. This would be required anyway for the use of the nursery school children. Much more important than the sheer practicalities was the fact that parents were clearly expressing a **need** for a community resource and had demonstrated by their willingness to come and talk that the nursery staff were trusted and acceptable.

The nursery nurse has been at the nursery for eight years and is well known in the school community. In addition to her morning nursery work, she does playground supervision and helps out in the primary school in the afternoons, so is able to maintain continuity with the children (and their families). She had experience of working with parents in placement with professionals, during her own training and makes a point of stressing the importance of such partnership now with students who are on placement at Blairhall. She remains dubious about the wisdom of staff actually visiting children's homes, feeling that when this was tried in the past, it was found to be unsuccessful. Opportunities for staff to talk to parents off the school premises are rare, being limited to occasional shopping meetings.

The nursery nurse feels that a useful way forward would be to develop a Parents' Room, (where parents would **not** be sitting in a cloakroom, surrounded by children's coats!) where pump pots of coffee would be available and they could have a little social time together.

Aim 2 **to clarify present policy on parent-teacher partnership and the methods of implementing this policy**

Appendix 7 gives the full nursery policy, of which paragraph 2 specifically concerns parental involvement. It stresses the two-way communication necessary between staff and parents and unequivocally welcomes parents. However, as part of a general policy statement it is of necessity brief, and consequently remains very much at the general level. What needs to be spelt out in more detail is why, what, how, when and where such partnership develops. There must be an idea of the kind of procedures adopted, the sorts of activities that parents can usefully share and the mechanics of how things are to be achieved. In short, the statement is warm and welcoming in general but lacks specificity.

The new policy statement on parents and staff working together might begin with similar words of welcome and give an indication of why such cooperation is necessary. Mention could be made of the importance of talking to the child at home, playing with him or her and sharing what has been learnt at nursery - of extending nursery activities into the home. Staff willingness to chat to parents should be stressed and there should be some indication of the wide variety of tasks which can be undertaken at nursery both with the children and to support the children. Specific examples could be given such as, playing with the children, baking, reciting stories, helping with snacks, helping their own child to choose a book from the library, accompanying children on visits and so on. It should be made clear whether parents volunteer for such activities, wait to be invited or what. Other activities which involve parents might be noted, like coffee mornings and special events, making plain if and when pre-nursery school children are welcome to accompany their parent. The parents should be informed of how they are supposed to know what is happening at nursery (Is it by being told by staff on daily visits, by consulting a notice board, posters, newsletter, what?) Mention might be made of the folder/record which is available for parents to have a look at, giving an account of nursery activities.

Stress can be put on the fact that suggestions and ideas from parents will always be listened to with interest and that staff would welcome comments from parents on how things are going. In addition to involvement in general activities, parents should be addressed about how they will be kept informed of their own child's progress.

The policy statement would be issued as a separate statement, but would not be lengthy. It would serve as a reminder to all those involved, of the aims and methods of implementation of a policy on parent-teacher partnership.

Aim 3 **to examine current methods of RECORDING**

At present, the nursery teacher's daily diary incorporates notes on parental involvement. It was decided to open a separate file, so that notes on parent involvement can be held together, to enable ready consultation and monitor progress. In addition, the teacher keeps a file of posters and information sheets to parents for her own reference.

Aim 4 **to identify procedures for monitoring and evaluating**

At the outset of the project monitoring and evaluating was done entirely informally, through chat at the, "How do you think it went?" level between staff and parents. None of the feedback was recorded. It was decided to include some space for evaluation after each entry in the record file and to try to encourage parents, as well as staff, to contribute to this either by telling the staff what they think, or, if they choose by making some written comments themselves.

Aim 5a **Summary of Suggestions from Parents** ("Where do we go from here?")

i Provision of facilities for the pre-nursery children, if parents were to become involved in nursery activities.

ii Weekly coffee morning (biscuits provided on rota; small contribution towards nursery funds). If possible infant teachers as well as nursery staff pop in occasionally. Wee children to be made welcome and/or creche facilities provided.

iii Some shared activities eg special Christmas lunch, when families (parents and pre-nursery children) could join with the nursery children and staff.

iv More Jumble sales.

v More local trips out of school.

Aim 5b **Summary of Suggestions from Staff Perspective** (Where do we go from here?)

i Continue to build positive face-to-face relationships between staff and parents.

ii Reword and expand the policy on parent-teacher partnership.

iii Investigate the desirability of deformalised information to parents eg cartoon booklets about what to expect of Nursery, to be read with the child.

iv Draw up a record of parent-staff partnership, to enable better communication and be a basis for overall evaluation of progress.

Perhaps make available to parents a loose-leaf, illustrated record of joint or nursery activities.

v Engage in some "market research" amongst parents about the acceptability/desirability of some home visits.

vi Develop the family support being offered by the nursery school; at the most basic, investigate possibilities for family attendance in the good weather (outside) or a Parent's Room with coffee available.

vii Improve the environment outside, continuing to work on plants and garden. Resurface the outside play area. Investigate some form of removable barrier to keep young children safely located when playing outside.

viii Explore possibilities for becoming a community nursery, with adequate space and care offered at pre-nursery as well as nursery level, and provision to allow parents to talk, give and receive support.

Aim 6 As aim 5.

Aim 7 to renegotiate (a) the policy statement:

We welcome parents into the Nursery. We hope that they will feel at home with us and will share with their child all the experiences of the Nursery stage.

Before the session begins, we would like parents to come and visit with their child, to become familiar with the staff and the play area and to enjoy activities together. Once term has begun, we would like parents to stay until the child is happy to be left. If after a while the child is still reluctant to see the parent go away, we will discuss what can be done. We try not to rush this stage.

During the first part of the session, parents are welcome to stay in nursery any morning, to share a book, a game, a jig-saw or anything else the child may have been talking about. We hope in this way parents will be part of the process of encouraging interests in their developing children.

The nursery staff are always available at the end of the morning to chat.

From time to time we hope that parents will spend a whole morning with us, either in the nursery or when we go out on a trip. Mrs Murray will be happy to arrange this and book it in the diary.

We hope that parents will be able to repeat and extend at home some of the new experiences gained at nursery and that they will share with us experiences they have had away from nursery which may aid out understanding of the child or which may be helpful to others. Ideas and offers of help are always welcomed.

We may ask for particular help from time to time and we hope that parents will feel able to respond.

Our notice board will tell parents about any important dates and also mention any other news, but the information is always passed on orally as well. The nursery calendar, hanging in the cloakroom, reminds of important events.

We look forward to working in partnership with parents.

Aim 7 to renegotiate (b) the recording procedures

i A running record has been kept (See Appendix). This is proving useful since:

(a) it allows a picture to emerge of the differing patterns of family involvement and in particular forms a check that no-one is completely left out.

(b) it indicates which kinds of activity seem more appealing to parents.

(c) it is a pleasing positive reminder of all the work done over the year, so helps maintain enthusiasm and help forward thinking.

Drawbacks

(a) time-consuming - although probably not more so for the teacher than keeping the old staff diary.

(b) the comment column seems a little obvious and global in a small nursery, although is recognised to have communication value for a team of staff, for students and to give continuity in case of absence.

ii A loose-leaf folder is being prepared, in which nursery experiences are not only recorded but there is space available for parent and staff comments. Parents are being reminded how useful it is for them to add a view to the record. Photographs of events are stuck in when they are removed from the current displays, to form a more permanent record of the year's work.

Aim 7 to renegotiate (c) the evaluation procedures

i Parents and staff will continue to discuss how things are going and where improvements can be made.

ii Staff are now required to write down a (brief) comment about each shared activity (see Appendix, Comment column).

iii Parents are invited to add a comment to the loose-leaf file illustrating the nursery year. At first, this may be very general, eg. "Brilliant fun" but will become increasingly specific. Critical comments will be particularly invited, eg. "Not enough time" and staff will remind how this is taken into account in forward planning.

iv When the first term's loose-leaf folder account is complete, there will be parent-staff discussion on its value and whether it is worth continuing. Any suggestion for improving parent-staff partnership will be shared.

v Staff will examine the records and review the year's work in parents and staff working together in order to plan next year's programme.

Aim 8 to draw up an initial list of areas for development and report progress

i provision of **facilities for pre-nursery** children - a small beginning in that several pre-nursery children attend every day (with mothers) to get used to the nursery and young children have been made welcome, in small numbers, to allow parents to share activities, eg. one mother learnt to sew, whilst her pre-nursery child played. Exploration of possibilities for a community nursery with under fives provision is under way, but no news so far: developments awaited.

ii In the summer term **coffee mornings** are planned, but starting at 11.00 am, so as not to take up the whole morning. A **weekly** meeting is not yet guaranteed, but weather permitting, parents should be able to sit outside and enjoy some shared time.

iii The **record** of parent-staff partnership is ongoing (see Appendix for illustrative extract). A loose-leaf photo album/record, including photographs, for general consultation is being prepared.

iv **Improve the environment outside** The H.M.I. report is still awaited and so temporary alternative strategies are being adopted (ie gro-bags will be brought in and planting begun).

v Progress can be seen in the number and variety of activities which are being shared with parents eg, a child was playing the keyboard in nursery and this encouraged a mother to bring in her accordian and play it for the children. A grandfather brought in plants from his garden and invited the children back to visit his garden and to see the fish pond. Parents sometimes join in at the end of the morning with a circle game, or song, or drama, participating with the children.

vi Parental education is taking place with staff: parents are beginning to grow in skill and confidence eg. a mother who said she could not sew, learnt how to at nursery and completed a cushion - very satisfactory.

v Parents are beginning to be educated by the children! eg. a child who is talented at playing the keyboard has taught a number of parents how to play a basic tune.

Appendix a

BLAIRHALL NURSERY

Children are admitted to Nursery when they are 3/4 years old. Normally the child will have reached his/her fourth year birthday by the end of February of the year following admission in August.

Visits are arranged before entry to Nursery so that the child can look forward to his new experiences.

During the time in Nursery we aim to provide the child with many differing experiences through play and interaction with other adults and other children through planned activities.

At the end of the Nursery experience we hope that a child will have gained in confidence and will be playing with other children. That he will have widened his vocabulary and his understanding. That he will be more curious, more imaginative and creative. That body awareness and control will be more developed and that he will be able to do more for himself. We seek to develop a love of stories, songs and rhymes in all of the children.

We hope to help the child to feel valued by other adults and children and to know more about sharing and taking turns.

We help the children to look forward to entering Primary school at the end of their time in Nursery.

Nursery Times	9.15 am - 11.45 am
Nursery Staff	Mrs J Murray - Nursery Teacher
Nursery Nurse	Mrs Dalgleish

Appendix 1

Parents Conversation Schedule

Introduction

- Interested in parents and staff in nursery schools working together to make the experience the best it can be for our children - being partners together.

- Education is shared responsibility. What sorts of things do you teach the children at home before ever they come to nursery school? (Many people see to think education is **teacher's concern**! Do you?)

1 Do you feel happy to be involved in the work of the nursery school? Do you feel welcome? What about later, at primary school?

2 Do you think parents can make much difference to what happens at the nursery?

3 In many nursery schools parents just don't want to get involved. Why do you think this should be?

4 At the **beginning** how did you find out about the nursery and make contact?
How did you know what was expected?
Was there anything you wish you had known then?
Did you have any questions which were unasked or unanswered?
Do you now ?

5 Do you feel parents should actually work with staff in the nursery, or do you think it better just to keep it contact?

If you do think parents should work with the staff, what sorts of things can you do?

a	in class	eg	baking sewing playing with reading talking to
b	out of school	eg	trips

6 Would you wait to be **asked** what to do or do you feel you can offer and make suggestions?

7 Have you tried anything which you think is particularly **valuable**?

Any ideas worth repeating or continuing?
Any problems?

8 Do you feel the staff keep you fully informed about your child's progress? Do they talk about your child's good points and let you know areas where he or she needs help and encouragement?

9 Do you feel able to ask if you need advice or help? Do you feel the staff will take time to listen?

10 Is there anything you'd like to see happening? Where do we go from here, in staff and parents working together?

Appendix 2

Staff Conversation Schedule : Focus on Parent - Staff Partnership

1 How long have you been at the nursery?

2* What documented evidence have you of a policy on parents and staff working together?

3* Is there any other **written** communication at all?

4* How else does a parent come to know what is expected of nursery school?

5 Did your professional preparation educate you at all for working with parents?

6 Would parents always come for a chat directly or would they make a phone call (or other contact)?

7 Do staff ever visit homes?

8 Do staff ever meet parents anywhere other than school?

9 Where do parents go when they visit school? (the mechanics).

10 What do they do? (in the class and outwith?)

11 How much involvement would you say there is from parents? (Is it the norm to drop the children off and get out?)

12 Do you explain your policies and basic approaches to parents?

13 Do you explain to parents what part they can play in their child's education?

14 Do you see parents as partners in their child's education?

15 Do parents mainly only chat to you if there is a problem?

16 Are there any suggestions or changes in the school as a result of parents' suggestions? Do parents often make suggestions?

17 Are there any devices/ideas which you feel are of particular value? Why? Problems?

18* What are your recording procedures for ventures involving parents?

19* How do you monitor and evaluate what has happened?

20 How do you see partnership developing? Where do we go from here?

* Questions to nursery teacher only

Families.

Please could you lend us photos of your child and your family. A family group would be ideal. We are thinking about families soon.

Appendix 4

NURSERY FUND RAISE

We invite you to sponsor Karen who is going to stop smoking for four weeks.

We hope to buy a microwave with the proceeds

Name	Amount per wk	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total

Appendix 5

BLAIRHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

ENROLMENT FORM

CHRISTIAN NAMES ..... SURNAME .....

.....

ADDRESS ..... TEL NO .....

.....

.....

DATE OF BIRTH ..... ADMISS NO .....

POSITION IN FAMILY .....

PARENT/GUARDIAN .....

OCCUPATION ..... EMPLOYER .....

EMPLOYER'S TEL NO .....

EMERGENCY CONTACT ..... RELATIONSHIP .....

ADDRESS ..... TEL NO .....

.....

MOTHER'S EMPLOYER ..... TEL NO .....

ADDRESS .....

FAMILY DR ..... TEL NO .....

DATE OF ENROLMENT .....

NAME OF PREVIOUS SCHOOL .....

EYESIGHT ..... HEARING ..... SPEECH ..... INOC ..... DIP .....

Any other relevant information

Appendix 6

Dear Mrs Murray,

Just an idea for fund-raising. (You may already know of this idea.)

—

Sponsored colour's.

Each child is sponsored for how many colours he/she can wear on one morning. Say 10p per colour (Ten or eleven colours) - £1.00. Ten Sponsors per child £10.00.

worth a thought!!

Mrs Bradley

—

Appendix 7

BLAIRHALL NURSERY POLICY

In the Nursery we aim to provide a warm, secure environment which is stimulating and challenging to the mind and body of a young child.

Through parental involvement and interest we seek to learn about the experiences that the child has had prior to his/her time in Nursery and to build on that. **We seek to maintain an open door policy so that parents are always welcome. We value their contributions and their insights and we try to share with them their child's growing awareness and skills.**

We encourage the children in school interaction and provide opportunities for many shared activities where the children can develop their ability to play in co-operation with others. We also provide the opportunity for individual experiences in small quiet settings. Nursery staff sometimes share in the play of the children. They do this when it may help social inter-action or extend the vocabulary of the children. It may also help a timid child if an adult is involved at certain times. Sometimes the adults become involved in play for mutual enjoyment.

We encourage the children to become increasingly independent. We help them to be able to cope with the toilet and handwashing routine, with feeding, introducing varied experiences with different types of food. We help them to dress and undress and where possible fasten shoes. We slowly introduce small responsibilities through snack provision and tidying up, through tending plants and feeding fish.

We help the child to become aware of the wider environment by taking trips out of Nursery and by having people visit us in Nursery. We seek to create a harmonious setting where sharing and taking turns and consideration for others are all part of being in Nursery together.

The Nursery operates through being Child centred. We provide materials for play that will help the child to discover more about his/her self. We believe that the child should be able to enjoy the challenge and opportunities provided by a range of materials that have been brought together because of an initial observed interest.

Opportunities for appreciating what the child is doing will be sought and used to foster language and give praise.

The child will have opportunity to develop his/her love of books, stories and music as well as to experience aesthetic feelings. He/she will be encouraged to be creative and to use his/her imagination through his use of the provision that is on offer.

We seek to develop body skills through indoor and outdoor activities focusing mobility, co-ordinating of body parts, self awareness and awareness of personal general space.

Children will be helped towards the transition from Nursery to Primary skills helpful for school, visual skills, listening skills and concept skills will all be fostered during the Nursery periods. In the later part of the Nursery year visits from Nursery to Primary I will help to familiarise the children with life at the next stage of their school career.

Janet Murray

Appendix 8

Extracts from Running Record of Parent Involvement

Date	Visitor	Occasion	Prior Organisation	Comments
20/1/92	Granny Kirkhouse	Came to take photographs to complete spool taken at Christmas Party	None	
	Grandad Pollock	Brought Del and Daryl come to look round to see where boys came each day	None	
	Mrs Pollock	Came towards end of morning for story. Promised to come tomorrow to spend time will boys	None	

Date	Visitors	Occasion	Prior Arrangements	Comments
22/1/92	Mrs Elliot & Russell	To share baby with nursery children	General invitation a while ago	Children enjoyed playing with Russell and looking after him. Mrs E fitted in well and became involved
	Mrs Bell brought nephew Lee	Became interested in potato animals, stayed to make some	General invitation	Mrs Bell always enjoys nursery activities and is helpful
	Mrs Pollock and Del	Made a krispie cake with Del. Enjoyed coffee and sausage rolls and left at 11 am	General invitation	Interaction Mum and Del very good. Rather hectic having so many stay at one session.
29/1/92	10 adults and several pre-nursery children	Coffee morning and sale, Visit of J. Arrowsmith	Poster and verbal invitations	Well received
3/2/92	Mrs Hamill	Came to arrange about her hair-do	Shared growing interest in hair and Mrs H responded by offering to give a hair-do	Very satisfactory arrangement
7/2/92	Mrs Hamill	Stayed while Alayna's cake was iced	Anticipation of birthday	A good sharing experience
11/2/92	Mrs Ross	Came in early for cup of tea	General invitation	A nursery friend
13/2/92	Mrs Hamill Mrs Lochlin & Laura	- Hairdresser - Model	Ballot for model	Provoked a lot of interest and was very pleasant
14/2/92	Mrs McNab & Mrs Pollock	Played a game with Del and Gary	The children had discovered the game the previous day	Encourages patience and sharing
18/2/92	Mrs McNab and Gran	Gran's birthday party	Mum and Gran provided food at our invitation	A happy time
20/2/92	Mrs McNab	Cup of tea and reading story to Gary	General invitation	Good relationship Mum/Gary
3/3/92	Mrs Elliott, McNab, Pollock, Hamill, Granny Pollock, Mrs Ross, Mr Dair	Pancake day	Spontaneous invitation	Great fun tossing pancakes everyone in happy mood

12/3/92	Mrs Hamill	Came to help Del figure out "Flower of Scotland" on the organ, talked about her accordian, went away and brought it back to play for us	General plea for someone who knew the tune	A new experience all round
17/3/92		Nursery visited Blairhall. We visited Mr and Mrs kirkhouse and saw their garden and delivered children home at the end of the walk	Promised excursions awaiting suitable weather	Nice to visit the area to be told bits of local interest
Holiday 15/4/92	Mrs McNab and new baby	First visit of new baby	Warm open invitation	Celebration all round
16/4/92	Steady stream of parents/carers and relatives	to hear Del play our recently acquired piano and to try it for themselves following numbers	Request by Mum	A good experience for both. Other children with talents to share?
22/4/92	Mrs Kennedy and Michael	To introduce Michael to nursery	Request by mum	
24/4/92	Mrs Pollock & Dee	to learn to use sewing machine and make cushion	Expressed interest	